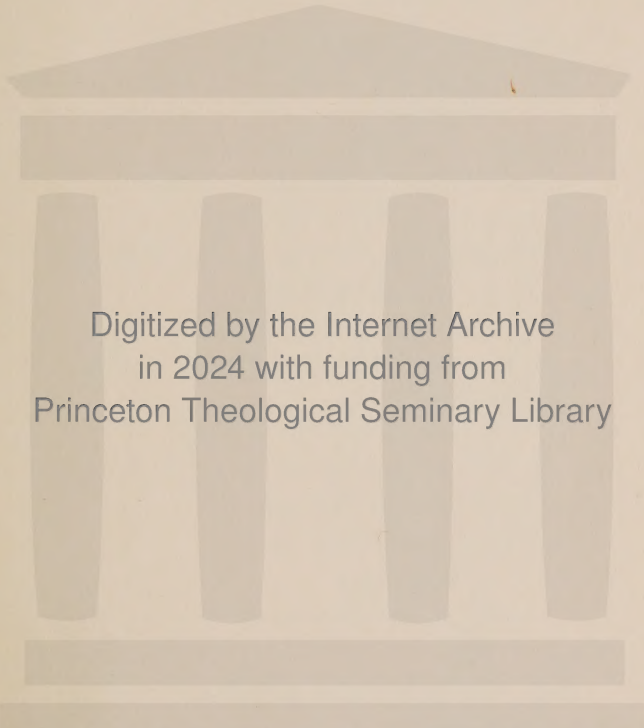


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Christian Affirmations

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CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND WORSHIP

AS HIS FOLLOWER

THE CHRISTIAN WAY IN A MODERN WORLD

STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST

HIS BODY THE CHURCH

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A LIVING FAITH FOR LIVING MEN

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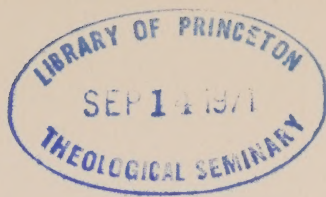
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THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH

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WHAT IS THE PRIESTHOOD?



Christian Affirmations

by

W. NORMAN PITTENGER, S.T.D.

*Charles Lewis Gompf Professor of Christian
Apologetics in the General Theological Seminary*

MOREHOUSE-GORHAM COMPANY

New York

1954

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*Printed in the United States of America
By The Haddon Craftsmen, Inc., Scranton, Pa.*

For
MILES and MARJORIE YATES
Dear Friends
Through the Years

PREFACE

THE first section of this book is the result of a series of Tuesday evening meetings at Trinity Church, New York, during November and December of 1953. On those Tuesdays I gave a number of addresses, answering questions often asked by Christian laymen and enquirers; the answers were taken down by tape-recorder and are here printed with very slight changes. It seemed best to leave them in the somewhat informal and conversational style which was inevitable in an attempt to answer, simply and directly, questions that were proposed to me.

In the second section, the Penick Lectures, given at the Women's College of the University of North Carolina, are reprinted exactly as they were delivered in November, 1952. I am grateful to the Penick Lectureship Committee for the invitation to deliver these lectures on "The Meaning of Christian Worship"; to Bishop Baker for his kind hospitality; and to others who entertained me during a pleasant week in Greensboro.

The last section, whose purpose is to bring the

PREFACE

material into a unity of faith, worship, and Christian life, was originally an address given to the clergy of the Diocese of Connecticut at the annual conference held at Kent School. I have re-worked this material for the present book, in the hope that it will relate the several themes in the earlier sections and summarize the Christian affirmations which are peculiarly relevant to our own time.

W. N. P.

CONTENTS

Preface	7
---------------	---

Section One

1. Why Do We Have Creeds?	13
2. What About Salvation?	27
3. Do We Need the Church?	40
4. Can Prayer Be Answered?	52
5. What Happens After Death?	64
6. Why Do We Worship Christ?	72

Section Two

7. The Unity of Worship and Prayer with Belief and Practice	83
8. The Nature of Worship	99
9. Christian Worship	112
10. The Personal Devotion of the Christian	127

Section Three

11. Our Faith and Our Living	145
	9

Section One

1

WHY DO WE HAVE CREEDS?

THE plan for the series of six meetings which we are having together includes the discussions of some questions that are often asked by Church people and by inquirers—questions concerning the meaning of important beliefs of the Christian Church, questions concerning certain practices which we find among those who are members of the Church. This evening the question which is before us is one which is very frequently put to all of us who are Christian people and most frequently to anyone who is a clergyman: “Why Do We Have Creeds?”

It seems to many people that Christianity is a very simple thing. It consists, they believe, in the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the promotion of good will and understanding among all people, and the development of a spirit of charity, a spirit of sympathy, a concern for justice; and that is about all there is to it. Jesus Christ in that idea of Christianity plays the part of the great teacher and prophet who enunciated the truths with which Christians are concerned, but who is not Himself the center of their worship and their service. I am afraid that I

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

have got to say flatly that any such view of the meaning of Christianity is simply wrong.

Of course, it is theoretically a possibility that the Christian Religion for two thousand years has been moving along the wrong line, and that another, and what might be called by some a better, understanding of the meaning of Christianity will take the place of that which has been conventional among us through these centuries. I say theoretically that is a possibility, but if we are concerned not with theoretical possibilities but with actual facts, we shall have to admit that Christianity is not the simple religion of God's Fatherhood and man's brotherhood, but rather the religion which finds God come to men for their wholeness of life in the person of Jesus Christ; and therefore finds in Him, in who He *was*, in what He *did*, in who He *is*, and in what He *does*, and in the consequences of those things, the whole substance of our Christian way of life.

If Christianity is centered in Jesus Christ, in who He was and what He did, in who He is and what He does, and in the consequences of these things, there will have to be a creed, there will have to be a statement of belief in Him and in His significance. And I think that one could say that those who object to creeds on principle are usually those who object to Christianity on principle, or more likely, do not know what Christianity is. They object, that is, to

the idea of any religion which is concerned with affirmations about the nature of things, with affirmations about historical personalities and their significance; and they prefer a religion which is concerned more with how *we* feel and think, or how we think we ought to feel.

Our creeds, such as we have in the Book of Common Prayer, are of course, two: the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. For purposes of American audiences, we do not have to think about a third creed which is found in the Prayer Books of all the other branches of the Anglican Communion, the Athanasian Creed, which has the misfortune of being neither a creed nor by Athanasius. It does not really concern us. It is a detailed, theological canticle set for singing, and is of extreme importance to theological experts but for most of us does not even get within our range of vision. We are concerned here with the Apostles' Creed, which we use in Morning and Evening Prayer and at some other times, and with the Nicene Creed which is the creed used in the Holy Communion. We ought to see how these creeds came to be.

Let us look first of all at the Apostles' Creed. That is a very simple thing. If you should look at it, you would find that it is divided into three sets of statements. One is a set of statements about Jesus Christ Himself; the other is a set of statements about God,

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

the Father of our Lord; and the third is a series of statements which are, as it were, the consequence of the other two. Now that is not the way the Creed actually runs. It begins by our saying that we believe in God the Father Almighty; it goes on to say that we believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; and it concludes by statements about the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. But the central paragraph, which is concerned with Christ, is literally the crucial paragraph, and it is that second and central section which helps us to understand how the Apostles' Creed came into existence.

When, in the earliest days of the Church, men and women who had been converted to Christianity were to be welcomed into membership in the Christian fellowship, incorporated into the Church, it was required that they should profess their belief in Christ as the Messiah—which is to say, God's special representative for the establishment of His kingdom among men—and as the Son of God—that is, as uniquely related to the Father of all mankind. From the simple formula used at Baptism the development of the Apostles' Creed takes its rise. It is quite wrong to think, as some people apparently do, that the Apostles sat down and contributed each one a clause to the Creed. That was an ancient and mistaken

idea. It is equally wrong to assume that a group of theologians, intent on making Christianity very difficult, determined that they would devise a sort of formula that would have to be accepted by anybody who claimed to be a Christian. The Apostles' Creed arose out of—and, in fact, still has its primary meaning as—a baptismal creed.

“Do you believe in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God?” If you do, you can be baptized and welcomed in the Church. That is the beginning of the Creed. But the early days of Christianity—the first two or three centuries—were not all easy going. There were theories, speculations, philosophies, and ideas which imperilled the Christian point of view. For example, there were those who believed that our Lord did not really have a human body and a human nature, and such people by their teaching imperilled the Christian assertion that God had acted for us in one of our own kind, and therefore in a way which we, men and women with bodies and human nature, could grasp and be grasped by. It is for this reason that the simple affirmation about our Lord as Messiah and Son of God was expanded to include the assertions of His birth, His death, His resurrection—sheer historical data to show that man's Salvation had been won in terms of our common humanity and on the open field of history.

There were some also who believed that the God

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

who had sent Christ was not really the final God of all things, that behind the God of religious experience and faith there was a dark, unknown, all-controlling being, or even a fate, and that in meeting Christ we met not this final God who in the long run is in control, but only, as it were, a secondary, but good, God. You can see at once that any such view would destroy the whole meaning of Salvation, because if the God who meets us in Christ is not the God finally in control of all reality, then life is not made safe. It may be that there are some obscure corners somewhere in which God's writ does not run. The Christian position does not hold by such views; and so assertions about God the Creator of Heaven and earth, the Almighty One, were placed in the Creed to safeguard the Fatherhood of God by making clear that He who is our Father is also the Ruler of all things.

And the implications of the coming of Christ in the forgiveness of our sins, the assurance of life beyond and through death, the persistence of personality conceived in terms (natural to the time) of the resurrection of the body: these too were added to the Creed, as being necessary to the right understanding of the purpose and mission of Christ as come from God.

So also to the Creed were added the Holy Spirit, the Church, and the Communion of Saints, all of

WHY DO WE HAVE CREEDS?

them closely related because all of them are ways of saying that he who commits himself to Christ commits himself also to that community established through Christ's coming, where the fact of Salvation is known and experienced and men are empowered from God by a Spirit which is given to them, a Spirit that is indeed so personal in operation that no longer can we call the Spirit 'that' or 'which,' but must call the Spirit 'Who' or 'He.' That is a very brief and inadequate sketch of the way in which from the simple, early baptismal formula we have received the developed Apostles' Creed.

Now let me try to say something more of the "Why" of the Creed, the "Why" of the Church's *having* a Creed. I think I can get at this best of all by pointing out that Christianity is not merely, as so many have thought, a way in which men live one with another, nor is it merely a way in which we worship God. It is also a set of affirmations which give meaning to our way of life and illuminate our worship of God, a set of affirmations in terms of which we live and the meaning of which is declared to us and by us every time we participate in an act of Christian worship. The Church, that is to say, stands for something or, as I like to put it, the Church belongs to the order of vertebrates—it has a backbone; it is not a jelly fish. To be a Christian means that you take a stand. It means that you take a stand

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

with millions of men and women over hundreds of years who have also taken that stand, the Christian stand, the Christian position: that God is, that God cares for men, that His care for men has included His coming among them in a Man to give them wholeness of life, that His care for men has included the bringing of them to Himself in fellowship with their brethren and with the assurance that life does not end with this short term of mortal years. If you are a Christian, this is what you believe and this is why you have a creed. If you did not have a creed, there would be no way of securing that the essential Christian statements would continue from generation to generation and across the whole world, uniting us as a fellowship in belief as well as a fellowship in worship and in Christian service.

But, of course, there is the problem of the way in which you and I as individual men and women are to say the Creeds. And I think that we should look very honestly at this particular difficulty in an effort to see precisely what the Creeds are all about.

Let me suggest that there are in the Creeds three different kinds of language. The first kind is historical. I have spoken about that. It is a statement that a certain Person lived in history, that He was in fact born, that He died, that He rose from the dead.

The second kind of language in the Creeds is what I should want to call by a word that I hope is

WHY DO WE HAVE CREEDS?

not too outlandish: "ontological." Now this is a word which comes from Greek. By it I mean that there are statements in the Creeds which concern the nature of things, the way things really are. There is, for example, an affirmation about God. Now that is not "historical"; God is not just somebody who happens to turn up in history. God is, in the very nature of things, *there*. And so also I should say that phrases such as those concerned with our eternal destiny are what I call by this long philosophical term—they have ontological significance.

There is a third kind of language in the Creeds, and that is symbolical language, the language which talks, for instance, about God's "right hand." Obviously, God does not have a right hand on which or at which Christ sits. This is the language of poetry, the language of metaphor. It used to be said—although I am told it is incorrect to say it—that when the Creed was translated into Chinese, it was necessary to alter the words so as to have Christ sitting on the left hand of God, this being the Chinese place of honor. This illustrates the point: if there were some culture where the place of honor was sitting on somebody's head, then we should have to put it that way, for "the highest place which heaven affords is His by right."

And while I am speaking of this, I might just as well say something about the Nicene Creed, with its

language about coming down from Heaven, and the like. After all, Heaven is not "up" and earth "down." But to say that Christ "came down from heaven" means that he entered with humility and love into the world of men, and so this symbolic phrase is appropriate, although obviously it is not to be taken literally, unless you want to subscribe to a view of the world in which Heaven is literally up and Hell is literally down.

I have mentioned the Nicene Creed, and I want to go on with it, because it is for some of us rather more complicated and difficult than the Apostles' Creed. The Nicene Creed is an amplifying and developing of the point of view stated in the Apostles' or Baptismal, Creed. The history of the Nicene Creed can be put briefly: apparently it is a rewriting of a statement of faith used in one of the churches of Asia Minor, adopted by a gathering of Christian bishops assembled in council in the town of Nicaea in A. D. 325, expanded very considerably at two later councils of the Church's bishops, and finally adopted in the approximate form in which we have it in the year 451, at a meeting of the bishops in the town of Chalcedon, held to rid the Church of some pestilent heresies concerning the meaning of Christ.

The Nicene Creed is constructed like the Apostles' Creed. The opening paragraph is concerned with God the Father. The middle paragraph deals with

the historical facts of Christ, but with something else too—namely, the relation of Christ to God, so there can be no mistake among Christians as to the major insistence of all Christian experience, that when we meet Christ we meet nothing less than God Himself. Christ as we know Him is so related to God that we use of Him the words, “of one substance with the Father”; which is to say that the very same stuff, the very same reality, is in Christ as characterizes the nature of God our Creator. The third part, like that in the Apostles’ Creed, is once again an amplification of the consequences of belief in Christ, with references to the Holy Spirit, to the Church, to the forgiveness of sins at Baptism, to our destiny beyond death. Here, once more, the same three kinds of language may be noted. “God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible”—this is the language which I call ontological, as is also the phrase “of one substance with the Father.” There are also the historical phrases: “born,” “crucified,” “died,” “risen.” And there are the symbolical phrases: “came down from heaven,” “sitteth on the right hand of the Father,” etc., like those we have seen in the Apostles’ Creed.

With that much behind us, we may go on to say something about the way in which you and I repeat the Creeds. Surely we cannot expect that the Creeds are to be treated as if they were hurdles over which

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

every Christian must jump in order to be "qualified" to be a member of the Church. It would be a little absurd to expect a three- or four-month-old baby to repeat *ex animo*, with complete assent, every phrase that occurs in the Creed. For the rest of us, too, it is not as if the Creeds were proposed as tests—that the Church puts up tests that we must pass with at least the grade of "D," or we cannot be admitted to membership. The fact that we baptize little babies who cannot understand anything about the Creed, and bring them up in a society where the Creed is said and believed, is the clue to the way in which the Creed is to be used. The Creed is the Christian Church's affirmation of belief; and when you and I say, "I believe," as we repeat the Creed, what we are really saying is this: "I take my stand where the Christian Church takes its stand, and, please God, I shall grow daily into a deeper understanding of that position which the Creed states, so that the faith which is the faith of the Church will more and more become my own personal faith too, until at the end of the day I, with all the saints, may join in the great *Te Deum* before the throne of God."

Anybody who has his wits about him does not ask a young person presenting himself for Confirmation to pass a test in dogmatic theology such as I might give my students in General Seminary. What is asked is that the young person shall be willing and desirous

to live the Christian life, to worship in the Christian way, and to share so far as may be possible for him in the Christian faith, trusting, indeed knowing, that as he lives the life and worships in the way, he will grow more and more in the understanding and the believing.

It is significant in this connection that in the early days of Christianity, the Creed—not the Apostles', but the Nicene—began with the Greek word πιστεύωμεν, "*we believe.*" This was the community's act of assent, and when Christians stood and said or sang the Creed, they were saying that they wished to be, they were intensely anxious to be, of the company of Christian faith. I think that if we understood this, one of the real difficulties that many people have about both Creeds would disappear, because as perhaps some of you may yourselves feel, there are certain phrases to be found in the Creeds that can cause trouble. Perhaps you do not know whether you can really say that you believe them with all your heart, and yet you would not want to contradict the Church's tradition, feeling that there is a wisdom here that may be deeper than your own. I should say that the right thing to do is to "come on in because the water is really very fine"; that there is no place where the wisdom of the Christian Church can be known save within the Christian Church; that if one can assent in general lines to

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

that which the Creeds say, one can rightly belong in the Church.

For my part, I believe that Christianity is true. It is not just helpful, nice, agreeable, valuable to develop your personality and help you make friends. It is true, and truth need never be afraid. Any man or woman who is willing to expose himself to the truth of the Christian faith in the life of the Christian community, nourished by the worship of Christian people, will discover that the truth becomes true for him.

2

WHAT ABOUT SALVATION?

EVERY man and every woman wants to be whole. That is the secular way of saying that every man and every woman wants Salvation.

Salvation, as an English word, is derived from a Latin root that means "health" or "wholeness," and health or wholeness, this desire to be all of oneself in the fullest and richest possible sense, is native to man. It seems to me that often we who are Christians, and perhaps especially those of us who are concerned to preach and teach the Gospel, have let words become a positive barrier to meaning. Frequently, words change their significance as the years go by. Often they become tarnished; very frequently they are misunderstood—and then they act as barriers to meaning rather than conveyors of meaning. This, I think, has happened with the word Salvation. Certainly there can be no doubt at all that for a great many of our fellow Americans, when the word Salvation is said, they think of hitting the sawdust trail, responding to the invitation to sit on the mourners' bench, or responding to the goings-on of Billy Graham or one of his predecessors. Sometimes they think that

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

Salvation is a sort of fire-insurance policy which guarantees that we shall not have a rather warm future beyond death. Very infrequently do our fellow citizens, even Church people I think, grasp the rich and full meaning of Salvation as the Christian tradition has understood this term. "What must I do to be saved?" means, "What must I do to be well, to be healthy in my total personality, to be a whole man as God intended me to be?" When we put it in this way, we see its vital significance, even to those who have, as they think, no interest in, or concern for, the Church and its teaching. Every man and every woman wants to be whole.

As it stands, unfortunately, you and I and all our fellow men are *not* whole. We are sick. We are unwell. We are disordered and disintegrating personalities. It does not take much introspection to understand this, to see it for oneself, to recognize the horrible fact that man is not well. He is not well physically much of the time, but this is not so important a fact about him as that he is not well spiritually; and by this I do not mean that he is unwell psychologically, that he is neurotic or that he has gone beyond neurosis into psychosis. When I say spiritually I mean that in his relationship with the sources of his being, with the things that ultimately and finally give his tiny existence meaning, he is unwell. He is maladjusted to Reality with a capital "R." Sometimes

people have not liked to admit this. They have thought that they were in pretty fine condition. They have disguised from themselves their spiritual disease. But I very much doubt that in this day, save among the very few people who manage to live in splendid isolation from the world in some kind of private ivory tower, people are really as self-satisfied as that.

The world is at sixes and sevens, and we shall all confess that things are not as they ought to be, even under the best human administration, so far as the "world-affairs" side of life is concerned. It is not indeed a political matter at all. We have seen perfectly well that all the increase in technical devices, all of the improvements in circumstance which are made by governments and other human agencies, simply do not accomplish our Salvation as a society; and the reason they do not accomplish our social Salvation is that the fundamental trouble with us is not that social matters are all askew but that our personal lives are in a state of bad health. *You and I* are why the world is all mixed up. Surely we realize this, or we ought to. Improvement begins at home, like charity. The attempt to blame society, under whatever form of government, party rule, or social pattern, for the ills that afflict us is one of the most absurd attempts at alibi-ing oneself out of difficulties that the ingenious and sinful mind of man has ever devised. The trouble is with us, with you and me.

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

We shall never have social health until we have personal health. We shall never save men in society until men personally are on the way to Salvation as the children of God. That is the way things are.

We were created in what theologians call the "image" of God. Alas, the fact is that in us, without exception, that image has been so blurred, dimmed, and damaged that it is often hardly recognizable. The image of God in man is man's capacity to relate himself meaningfully, freely, and with complete devotion to God Himself, but you and I have managed so to harm this capacity that it is almost impossible for us to make any strides whatsoever towards that relationship with God our Creator.

Some think this is a very pessimistic point of view. Some feel that man is able under his own steam to make meaning for himself. But it is my suspicion that the people who say this, and usually say it rather glibly, are people who have not bothered to look very deeply into their own lives. They are often quite charitable toward themselves, although they tend to be a little cynical about their neighbors. It is easier to see sin in the person next door to you than it is in your own heart. We men are very well gifted with this kind of dishonesty.

But those of us—and today they are legion—who have dared to face the facts are crying like the man in Acts: "What must I do to be whole?" It is to

people like that, who are facing the facts, that the Christian Gospel speaks with high meaning. The old-fashioned evangelist had a saying that it was only to a person convicted of sin that the word of reconciliation could come. I think this is profoundly true. The only people who can be saved are the people who know they need Salvation. That is why the very first step to any adequate understanding of what Christians have meant by Salvation is an honest look at ourselves. Granted that we have done this, we can then begin to see why the affirmation that "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," speaks right to our condition.

It is hardly my purpose here to enter into a discussion of ways of honestly facing oneself. But there is one thing which has always seemed to me the most devastating judgment ever made by any man upon himself. That is to look at the Cross, to see there what most people of good will are prepared to admit—human life at its best and finest. Of course, this is not all that Christians believe, or even the major part of what Christians believe, about Jesus Christ; but for our purpose, it is enough now just to admit at least that much, to see here life given in love to the point of complete surrender of self, to agree that the ages witness that this is healthy life, this is wholeness, and then to turn to oneself and ask the very simple but very searching question, "How do I measure

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

up to that standard?" I think that the answer of any honest person will be, "I do not measure up to that standard at all. My selfishness, my concern for place, my pride, my unwillingness to give myself—all of these so powerfully affect my very being that I am forced to say, 'Depart from me for I am a sinful man.'" There are many other ways in which this kind of judgment of self, with the resulting conviction of sin, unhealth, may come home to us. This one seems to me, for people who profess and call themselves Christians and who are to some degree influenced by Christian ideas and symbols, the most striking and terrible.

What we need, then, is wholeness that will replace our brokenness, health that will drive out the infection of self-centeredness in us, power that will make us function like men rather than as sophisticated but not really very smart animals. We need Salvation; every man needs Salvation.

Now there is only one way in which personalities can be made whole, and that way is by falling in love. I do not mean by this the sort of thing the motion pictures portray; I do not mean the sentimentality of "soap-operas" on radio or television. What I do mean is that our greatest Salvation is found when we extrovert ourselves, when we turn our attention and give our whole concern to some other person, in caring for whom we find our health and our joy.

Just ordinary experience makes that perfectly plain. Have you ever watched a member of your family who has fallen very deeply in love? There you see the way in which a life which may have been disorganized, self-centered, thoughtless, and indifferent to others finds a center in which it can discover the meaning of existence, presented in the object of affection. But what is much more important, we see how one can commit oneself with a splendid throwing-away of the narrowness, pettiness, self-seeking that dogs our lives. This is what a Scottish divine once called "the expulsive power of a new affection," by which we are redeemed from the sort of self-centeredness that gives us our sin.

So through the history of the human race, men have sought that with which they could fall in love. They have tried to commit themselves to all sorts of things, gods and half-gods, which they think will serve the purpose of saving them. The trouble with most of these gods and half-gods is that they are not adequate to the job. A human object of love may serve for a while, but unfortunately the mortality rate is one hundred per cent. Even our best friends may let us down. There is no guarantee that any human will be "without variableness nor shadow of turning." It is only Reality, the ultimate and final Reality of God, which is a safe object of love.

Or look at it another way. We are maladjusted;

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

we do not get on well enough with our friends, colleagues, business associates. We know this and we seek right adjustment. The psychologists have understood this for a long time. Unfortunately, many of them have said that all we really must do is to become adjusted to the society in which we live and then we shall be well, since health is a relationship between us and our environment. One is inclined to say that anybody who is well adjusted to contemporary society is by definition very maladjusted indeed, because contemporary society is as mad as a coot and is something to which nobody ought to be adjusted, even in this land, not to speak of others which may be less fortunate than ours. There is only one Reality to which adjustment may be made with security and safety. That is our *final* environment, the One in whom "we live and move and have our being," the One whom we call God. To be adjusted to Him is to be adjusted to *that which is*; and all other adjustments are only to *that which seems to be*.

The Christian Gospel proclaims—because you and I are not able of ourselves to help ourselves, because our mundane loves will not really make us whole, because our adjustments to temporal realities will not save us—that God has acted for our health, to give us a way to be well. For myself, I do not think that this is the only reason for what we call the Incarnation. It seems to me that even if men were not sinners

(an almost incredible thought!), still God would have brought the world of human affairs into such a relationship with Him as in Christ He did do, so that He might crown His many comings and revealings and workings among us by this supreme and definitive act. The *fact* is, however, that we *are* sinners, and that therefore it is medicine that we need; and in Christ, so Christians believe, God has provided the medicine of mankind.

There have been many theories as to the way in which, through Christ, we may be made well. Some of them are a little difficult for modern ears, as, for example, the ancient theory that man, having been sold to the Devil, must be brought back by God; and so God paid a price to Satan. Many of our hymns reflect that theory; if we take them seriously and symbolically but not literally, we probably do no harm to ourselves, although sometimes we do not edify our non-Christian friends. Sometimes the theory of the way in which we are made well through Christ has been put in terms of the honor of God having been offended by the enormity of man's sin and the consequent necessity for some compensation to be made to God's honor. This is a feudal conception which did very well in the Middle Ages but is hardly intelligible to us today.

I myself do not have any *theory* of what we call the Atonement. I prefer to take all the theories and

look at each as a way of stating something of importance in terms appropriate to the day in which various people have lived. I presume that if we were to find some metaphor that would do the job for our own day, we should probably want to turn to the hospital and speak of the "Great Physician," or we should want to go to the psychiatrist's clinic and speak of the "Healer of our Spiritual Ills." But it seems to me that all of these are of slight importance in comparison with a simple fact of experience: the observable truth is that men and women who have really let themselves go—committed themselves, turned from self-centeredness outwards, looked to, and centered life in, Christ—have, in fact, become different from the run-of-the-mill type of men and women.

They have indeed started to be "saints." That is what all of us are meant to be. One is a little afraid of saying this, because most people think of saints as anemic human beings who inhabit bad stained glass windows. But a saint is simply a healthy person. And since I began this answer by some exercises in word derivation, I will go on by saying that in German, for example, as in French, the word for *saint* means "whole," or "hale," or "healthy." It means a well person. A saint is a man or a woman who is open to the inrush of the healthy life of God. A saint is a person who—in the trite and often repeated remark of the little girl, thinking, I suppose, of the stained glass window—"lets

the light shine through." By letting the light shine through, by being the instrument or vehicle for some Power or Force not of oneself, one is delivered from the appalling self-centeredness which is the fact of our sin. "There is only one sadness," said the French writer Leon Bloy, "—not to be a saint."

The only really tragic thing in life is to be a self-centered, narrow, proud, possessive, "holding-on" kind of person. The only joyful and great thing in life is to be a person who is so open to Reality, so adjusted to *that which is*, that the whole of one's life becomes a vehicle for the charity of God. I said *the charity of God*; for Christians that means *Jesus Christ*. God sent Him forth as that One who takes away our sin. We could not find the way, but as Saint Augustine said, the way has come to us and all we have to do is to walk in it. Christ is the way.

Salvation means that you and I and every son of man may be given healthy lives, rightly adjusted to the things that are, and delivered from allegiance to the things that seem to be. Salvation means that we who are unwell in our inner spirits may have the healthy life of God's charity, which is Christ, poured into us through our discipleship, our prayer, above all, our Communion; and may live whole, healthy lives in Him. Salvation means that we are delivered by this fact from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, because

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

our final treasure is placed where moth and rust cannot corrupt.

There is one question which may come to the minds of some of you. If this be true of us who are Christians, or if this may be true of us, what about those who have not heard the Christian Gospel? What about their Salvation? There are two things only that I should wish to say: One—that you and I are not competent judges of anybody's life, save our own. We do not know to what degree those who have not heard of the Christian Gospel may in their own way have responded to whatever of God they did know under whatever disguise God chose to use in coming to them. The second thing is that this statement in no way modifies our responsibility to share with all men everywhere what, if once we have been grasped by it, is for us saving truth, truth so important that it is unthinkable that we should let anyone through our failure go without the privilege of hearing and accepting it.

Sometimes people have asked the question this way—"Who is in Hell?" My own answer to this has always been, "When you wake up there you will be surprised to find who is absent." It is not for us to make any such judgments. There is a lovely medieval legend that Judas Iscariot once gave a cup of cold water to a thirsty person, and that simple act of outgoingness was enough for God to use to bring him

eternal health. And yet Salvation is not an easy matter, so we cannot say with confidence that everybody has it or will have it. Look around you, look inside you, notice the ill health, the dis-ease which is the token of the disease. We are not permitted to judge lest we be judged; but of ourselves surely we can say, "I am sick, I need health. By God's grace this health has been made available to me. I have been accepted just as I am. All that remains for me to do is to accept with my whole heart and life the fact that I have been accepted. Then I shall be well and my life will be on the way to increasing wholeness here and now, and beyond death by God's re-creating act to all eternity in His presence. Yet I must decide, I must say Yes, I must use all of the means, all of the ways that are at hand. I cannot put this off. God's grace is my responsibility; and even then, at the end of my days—because I know how prone I am to love my disease, to like being sick, to enjoy being a spiritual hypochondriac—I must always remember that by my own decision I may refuse health." That is why, from his first day until his last, a Christian must say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and must admit that he has done the things which he ought not to have done, left undone the things which he ought to have done, and has found health only in God; to whom, by His mercy, may we all cleave, and so ever find His health in us.

3

DO WE NEED THE CHURCH?

THE Bible begins its saga of man's Salvation by portraying Adam alone in a garden. It closes that saga with the company of faithful people living in the City of God. The story is a story of man's movement from solitude to fellowship, from individualism to community; and it is a way of saying that man, to be redeemed, needs not only the work of God for his Salvation but the companionship of his human brethren in God. That, I suppose, is the final reason why we need a Church.

We cannot even live to ourselves alone, much less be saved alone. Some of you may remember that Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, had occasion to remark that man is a social animal. We all know this is true, although frequently we try to evade the fact. There are plenty of people who want to be "lone wolves." There are very few people who succeed in that enterprise. We live one with another. The existence of the family is a token of this. God, the Prayer Book says in one of its collects, has set the solitary in families; and the man or woman who has not had some experience of family life is to that degree

an impoverished human being. A child was found in India, so they say, who from earliest infancy had been away from fellow humans and lived amongst animals; and it was impossible, despite years of effort, once the child had been recovered, to make that child a fully-developed human being. A lone man may make a very good animal but he does not make a very good human. This is the natural ground for the religious fact of community—one with another—under God and in God.

As individuals, we tend to be peculiar—and by this I do not mean certifiably or uncertifiably insane. I mean that we tend to have particular and characteristic ways of saying and doing things. Each one of us is unique. Some of us are very unique! We need other people to balance our peculiarities, our particular characteristics; to give proportion to our point of view. And this, too, is a natural basis for the religious fact of community under God.

Men and women seem to have an extraordinary predilection for getting together. Sometimes this is just for the sake of getting together. "The more we are together, the happier we will be"—with clubs, even bridge clubs, with fraternal groups, with societies of all kinds for the promotion of everything and anything. These are usually to be explained not so much by the cause to which theoretically they are dedicated as by the fact that men and women do not really want

to be alone. Sometimes this is overdone; and it might be said—in fact, I myself might wish to assert it—that, in America particularly, our assumption that getting together for the sake of getting together in order that we might get together, is rather inane. I have found that on occasion I really sympathize with a friend of mine who feels that organizations of people are to be avoided as the plague; but I think that is peculiar of me, probably because I live in a rather close-knit community and sometimes find a “gold-fish” existence somewhat fatiguing. But the fact of our wanting to be with one another is another natural ground for the religious fact of community under God.

One could go on with these natural grounds, but for Christians there is one fact which is more significant than any of the natural bases for human fellowship. That fact is the divinely-established basis of community, namely, the divine creation of the Church. It is not correct to say—and perhaps my denying it will even be startling to some of you—that Christ founded the Church. One of my revered friends and former colleagues in the General Seminary, Frank Gavin (God rest his soul), used to say: “Christ did not found the Church, He *found* the Church.” By this he meant that the Christian Church is rooted in the older Israel “after the flesh,” the Jewish dispensation, and that dispensation is itself rooted in the act of God in calling to Himself a people who

were to be, in a special sense, his people, through whom he would work for the Salvation of all men. That is what the *Old Testament* is all about. What our Lord did was to find the Church, the older Israel, and then, through His life and death and resurrection, to re-found that which He had found, on the rock of the confession of believers that in Him God had visited and redeemed His people. The Church is the new Israel—God's chosen people, newly constituted as His chosen people, through faith in Christ as the Messiah of God. That is what the *New Testament* is all about. To be a Christian, as to be a Jew, means by definition to belong to a society. To be a Jew means to be an Israelite; to be a Christian means to be a part of the Body of Christ. The relatively modern view, that one can be a Christian in the full sense of the word without membership in the Church, is not found in the New Testament at all, and when St. Paul describes the Christian as one who is "in Christ," he is describing one who is a member of the Body of Christ, which is Christ's Church. That is a simple historical fact.

Of course, *in a sense* it is true that one can be a Christian apart from the Christian Church, if by Christianity we mean an adherence to certain Christian ideas or beliefs or affirmations; but to think that this constitutes real Christianity is rather like saying that one can be an American while at the same time one

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

lives in Timbuctoo and follows the practices that are usual there, even though one believes some of the ideas which animate American life and attempts to introduce some of the notions of morality by which Americans claim to live. I think a "Timbuctoo-anian" who claimed to be an American would be a rather ludicrous spectacle. So a person who claims to be a Christian away from the Christian homeland and with little more than a nodding at, or at best a rather limited acquaintance with, Christian ideas and practices is not, perhaps, a ludicrous but rather a pathetic spectacle.

The Church is the place where Jesus Christ is known. This is true historically. Some of us are not aware of the fact that apart from the New Testament, which is the Church's Book, written by Churchmen in the early days of our religion, there are only three or four references to Christ in secular literature. Our knowledge of Him, even our historical knowledge of Him, depends upon the Church's tradition. People who have nothing to do with the Church but who reverence our Lord are dependent upon the Church for the possibility of their reverence. Had there been no Church, they could not have done this.

But above all, this is true as a matter of living religion. The Church is the place where we meet Christ through the sacraments; and if one is concerned with the most direct encounter that is possible for us

with our Lord, it is in the Holy Communion that we shall find this, and this is known in and of the Church. There is an ancient saying that "outside the Church, there is no Salvation"; that is the kind of saying which needs re-interpretation because, as it stands, it seems to remove the majority of the human race—if you consider human history in its duration—from the possibility of eternal life. Of course, it does not really mean this at all. What it means is that the assurance of our health—spiritual health, right relationship with God, adjustment to things as they really are—is given, and only given, as positive assurance within the Christian community because the Christian community, in its deepest meaning, is the continuing of God's saving work, His health-giving action, through Christ himself. That is what is meant when we call the Church "the Body of Christ."

Your body and mine have their significance in that they are the means by which we express ourselves and communicate ourselves to the world around us. Ordinarily, despite what may be said about extra-sensory perception, our bodies are our way of relating ourselves to our fellow men. Christ's physical body, in the days of His flesh, was the way in which He made Himself known and available to those who companied with Him in Palestine. Christ's risen body was the way in which, after the Resurrection, He still communicated Himself to His people. Christ's sacra-

mental Body—the Bread and the Wine of Holy Communion—is the means by which now He communicates Himself to us. And Christ's mystical Body, which is the Church—His social body, if I might put it so—is the way in which the work of health-giving, whole-making, or Salvation, is carried on through the ages. That is why the assurance of our spiritual health is found in and with the Church, whose Gospel and whose worship bring directly to us that which for us men and for our Salvation was wrought on Calvary's hill. So it is that by Baptism, which is the sacrament of regeneration, those who, by nature, are members of the human race become members of Christ's people, His flock, and are incorporated into His Body, made living members of the same, and through that membership receive spiritual regeneration and Grace. The Church is the way in which this is *certainly* done.

Of course, I ought at once to add, as I tried to show when we were discussing Salvation, that we dare not say that those who are not members of the Church are without hope of Salvation. This is God's business, and it would be well if we men kept silent where we have no proper information. But we do know most certainly that it is within this community, and as members of it, that we have our assurance of God's Grace for our wholeness.

Many people are rather troubled about the Church. They point out that it has been here for two thousand

DO WE NEED THE CHURCH?

years and the world is not very much improved. One wonders precisely how they know the degree to which the world is or is not improved. This is like the speculation on what things would have been like if Cleopatra's nose had been of somewhat different length. Certainly it is right to say that the effect of the Christian Church, and whatever it has done through the history of the last two thousand years, has produced immeasurable effects. Some of them are very practical. It is interesting to know, for example, that hospitals, the care of orphans, the place of respect given to women, are all of them results of the Christian Church's existence in the world. If you do not believe me, think of man's life where Christianity has not really penetrated. Of course, these things and many like them are now taken over by welfare agencies of a secular sort; and it is perhaps wrong for the Church to seek to hang on to them when others can now do them well. But let us not forget that we owe them to the Christian Church.

Again we are told that the Christian Church has not managed to stop war. But the Christian Church never professed to work miraculous cures in man's nature. Look at the material with which it has to work! Selfishness, pride, the desire for power are not eradicated as man continues in the world. They appear fresh and terrible in every newborn son of man. In no significant sense can we claim that there

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

has been moral progress in the human race since the first pages of recorded history. I realize that this is to some an "un-American" statement but I believe it to be true!

All of the gadgeteering, and the educational devices, and the group dynamics, and whatever else, do not alter this basic fact; and it is with this that the Church must wrestle from age to age. It is no wonder, then, that war has not been eradicated, since war is in men's hearts.

Or, we are told, the members of the Church are not noticeably better than those who are outside the Church. Yet the Church is the only organization on earth whose only condition of membership is that we shall acknowledge that we are not good. The Church is its Lord's Church, and as He seemed to enjoy the company of confessed sinners rather than of professed righteous men, so the Church, as His Body, does the same. A well-known New York clergyman, once told by an inquirer that the Church was impossible because it contained so many hypocrites, replied, "Come on in, there is always room for one more." That is more profound than you might think. There is always room for another sinner if only he has the grace to acknowledge that he is a sinner. If the Church were the perfect society of saints, I, for one, should be very suspicious of it.

There are some complaints which are properly

made about the Church—for example, it tends to be over-conservative. But there is a reason for this. In any of the activities of men which are most vital to their deepest human interests, such conservatism is generally found. Religion is a very vital concern. It incorporates itself in rites and practices and beliefs that inevitably are carried over from generation to generation. We do not like changes in the things that have become dear to us, that have in fact been the way of our meeting God. This, in a profound sense, is the reason that any change in the liturgy will always trouble people on one side or the other. People do not like the change because they are familiar with something that has touched them deeply.

The Church has also been tempted to identify itself with conservative political and economic interests. Once again, one can understand why this is so. Any institution of long standing begins to acquire a stake in the *status quo*; and those who are responsible for the institution are rather troubled if that stake is pulled up. They wonder how the institution will continue in existence. But the Church's conservatism in this and in other ways, wholly understandable, is perhaps not excusable. I think what we who are Churchmen need to realize is that although the Church is the divinely-established fellowship in which Christ's work is being done, this divine reality of the Church is coupled with what, for want of a better word, I may call the

Church's "empirical" side. By which I mean the side that we see here, that is organized in humanly-devised organizations and groups. This side has about it no guarantees of any kind whatsoever. When we say that the Church is necessary to the Christian life, we do not, by that token, say that the national and diocesan organization of the Episcopal Church is necessary. This is an institution of a human sort; it may come and go; and we are not to be conservative in the false sense of thinking that the various ways of the Church's organizing its business and running its parishes, are eternally established. What is guaranteed is the Church as the Body of Christ, one as He is one, filled with His Spirit, belonging to Him, knit together in a community which is truly Catholic, possessing the Apostolic Gospel, and sent into the world to preach it and to live it. What is really guaranteed is the Church as the eternal Body of Christ, not the Church as organized under the name of "Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America" or any other name.

I am not saying that these things are not important, valuable, ways in which the divine society works; but it is here that we can afford to be a little "tentative." I shocked some people sometime ago by saying that in the revolutionary world order that, in my judgment, is to overtake us in some measurable period of years, it seemed very likely to me that the organizational side

DO WE NEED THE CHURCH?

of the Church will be radically altered. The National Council and the Woman's Auxiliary might no longer exist; there might be no vestries; much else might go. These things might change, I said, and this idea seemed startling to my hearers, who thought it would be the shaking of the foundations. But of course it really would not; it would be a mere disturbance in the superstructure. We need to understand, you and I, that when we defend the Church, we are defending the foundations. We are not defending incidental elements of Christian organization. I say all this because it seems to me that many lay-people (who might be excused) and many clergy (who cannot be excused) are guilty of great confusion on this point; they try to defend too much. It is bad strategy to do that. What we need to defend is that which is essential; and that which is essential is the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, with its Scriptures, its sacraments, its life in Grace, its faith as witnessed by the Creeds, and its holy order as symbolized and continued in the Apostolic ministry. These are the necessary things; and we need them all because they are part of the reality of the Body of Christ, apart from which we have no certainty of health in the Christian sense of that word, but in which we have the assurance of Christ's saving work brought home to our souls for now and for eternity.

4

CAN PRAYER BE ANSWERED?

THE question which we shall now consider is one that a great many people ask, sometimes from curiosity but more frequently with deep personal concern, even with anguish: "Can my prayer be answered?"

All men pray. Sometimes they do not pray to the God whom we Christians worship, but insofar as they direct their thoughts and desires toward that which they conceive to be greater than they, and somehow in control of things, they pray. William James, the distinguished American psychologist and philosopher, once remarked that the important point is not why men pray, but that men cannot help praying. When they are happy, they want to thank somebody. When they are in need, they wish to ask for help. When they feel that they have done wrong, they seek to express their guilt. Prayer is a perennial fact about men as men; and one might say that insofar as sophisticated moderns have assumed that prayer is an outworn, superstitious practice, they have by

that token ceased to be men and have contented themselves with being a rather sophisticated variety of simian.

Of course, the first thing we must ask when we seek to consider the question of prayer is how prayer may be defined. I want to suggest to you the classical definition of Christian prayer that is found first stated by a great theologian of the earlier days of the Church, St. John of Damascus, and taken over by St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century: "Prayer is the elevation of the soul to God." You notice that that definition does not say anything at all about the sort of prayer (which for many people exhausts the subject) which is concerned with the coercing of God so that He will give us what we think we need. Rather, it centers the meaning of prayer in a relationship to God. Prayer is the elevating, the lifting up, of our personalities—which is for me a more satisfactory word than *soul*—so that in the presence of God they may become that which in God's intention they are meant to be, related to Him in healthy, wholesome, invigorating, and altogether good intercourse.

If you look at prayer as the great teachers of prayer have described it, you will find that the first aspect of it mentioned by all of them is not petition but adoration. "Religion," said Baron von Hügel, that great scholar-saint of our own time, "is adoration." To adore God, to praise Him for what He is, to delight in Him:

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

this is the heart of prayer, and anything that we may wish to say about the answering of our personal or corporate desires must come a long way after the adoration which we owe to God. Adoration with thanksgiving; the recognition of our defects, our failures, and our sin in the presence of God; and the attempt to conform our little impotent wills to the plan of God—here we come to the crucial elements in Christian prayer. I suppose that the words of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night in which He was betrayed give us the clue: “Not my will but thine be done.” The elevation of our personalities to God so that adoring Him, thanking Him, recognizing our imperfections, and seeking to relate ourselves to Him so that His Will may work its way in us, is prayer in the Christian sense.

To the question, “Can this sort of prayer be answered?” the answer which we should give, I think, is quite obvious. Of course it can be answered. The man who seeks to bring himself into relationship with God and seeks it with as much earnest zeal as others seek the goods which they may obtain in their several businesses and professions in the ways of the world does not come away empty. Our Lord, you will recall, said that “the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light”; by which He meant that people who are seeking a purely secular good frequently show a great deal more zeal

CAN PRAYER BE ANSWERED?

and exert much greater effort than those who are seeking God and His Kingdom. If we do not put a hand to the job, we can hardly expect an answer to be given us.

I do not know very much about mathematics, but I do know that the difference between ten and fifteen minutes a day spent in seeking to know God and to relate oneself meaningfully to Him, and the number of minutes that we spend in quite different pursuits, is rather extraordinary. There is something to be said for the scale of time spent in the effort of prayer because, like all worth-while things, prayer is not an easy—although it is a very simple—thing for us.

Of course, the real question which is in people's minds when they ask if prayer can be answered is whether or not their petitions for others and for themselves will be effective. And here, with that ambiguity which I suppose is common to all people engaged professionally in theology, my answer will have to be Yes and No. It all depends. Let me begin by putting it this way—and here I quote a favorite sentence from Dr. William DuBose, a great American theologian forgotten by most Americans, for many years a professor at the University of the South—“There is no limit to that which God will do for us, but He will never do it in spite of us, but always through us.” That is a very good beginning for a con-

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

sideration of prayer for things and persons that we deem to need our asking.

The principle here, you see, is the very sound Christian principle, although often forgotten by Christians, that God works upon us and in us by working through our humanity. The great example of this, the illustration of it, is the central belief of all Christians; we call it the Incarnation. When God willed to manifest Himself to His human children in the most intimate manner, and to bring to them His Grace and power as fully as possible for them, He did not speak to them as from a thunderstorm, He did not manifest Himself as a startling wonder, He did not contradict the conditions of our ordinary humanity. Rather He came to men in a Man: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Yes, dwelt in us: joined with, permeating through, our ordinary run-of-the-mill humanity, not alien to us, not remote from us, not working upon us as at a distance or by some strange mechanism unrelated to our humanity, but in the terms of our human nature. If you want to know God, you are not to seek Him far off in the starry heavens; you are to seek Him close at hand in One of your brother men. If you wish to receive power from God, you are not to go to distant places, but to go to a very near place, a holy family, a simple human life, a death, such as all men must experience.

This which is the basic principle of Christianity,

that God is working upon us and in us and for us and with us *in the terms of our human experience*, has its profound significance for our life in prayer. Dr. DuBose said that God will not work in spite of us, but in us and through us; and often enough our problems about prayer are really caused by our assumption that prayer is answered by some bolt from the blue which contradicts everything that we have ever done, ever known, ever thought. The truth is—if we take this Christian principle seriously—that it is within our own lives that the answer to prayer is given. If, for instance, we pray for a friend who is ill, God's answer to our prayer includes as one of its major elements His sending of us with our concern, our love, our capacity to help. This may not be all there is to it, but this surely is a major part of it. If we ask that we shall grow in grace, the answer comes in terms of our human experience, demanding our co-operation with the movement of God in our hearts to respond to all that we see and know of His goodness. The limits to what God can do in answer to prayer are, in that sense, set only by our willingness to be used as instruments for the divine goodwill. Thus you could say that the question, "Can our prayers be answered?" ought really to be re-phrased and put in this way: "Are we willing to be the instrument of God in the accomplishment of His purpose in that place and at that time where our lives are lived?"

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

You will at once see that there can be no scientific objection to a consideration of prayer so far as I have described it. The empowering, strengthening, invigorating of our human lives by divine energies that work in us will not in any way violate whatever we may know to be psychological process. The universe, as scientific study has disclosed it to us, is open to this kind of subtle and vigorous movement of spiritual power working in and through human nature. But what we often have in mind is that the very orderliness of the world shall be changed at our behest. We may pray for rain when to all appearances the laws of meteorology are against the answer to this prayer. We may ask for such changes in situations as would turn the world upside down should they be granted. It is at this point that the problem becomes for many people quite acute, and it is at this point that two observations ought to be made. The first one is that since God is our Father, by which we mean that He cares for us after the fashion of our concern for our children but with an intensity altogether beyond our human imagination, He would wish that we should tell Him, although already He knows, all that we think we need, all that we want to have. The second observation is that like a good father, God does not play favorites, that God has established an orderly world in which, by the operation of His own purpose, He is effecting great ends. We do not know

very much about these ends save as they affect us, in that we shall be whole, healthy, well-adjusted personalities who can live rightly with God now and through all eternity in His presence.

Our grasp of God's plan is very slight indeed, and there is something a little preposterous about man's dictating to God what He shall do with His world. Do our prayers for rain or sunshine, our prayers for changes in circumstances, our prayers for things which we feel we need, have an answer? Of course they have an answer. Frequently the answer is, "No—you do not know what you want. You may think that you know, but you really do not." Sometimes the answer is, "In due course. If you will align your tiny human energizings with the great Divine purpose, then this for which you seek may come." Sometimes the answer is, "Yes, since that will be in accordance with the plan that God is working out." Many of us fail to take into our consideration of prayer the picture of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," and added, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."

Those who try to use prayer as a way of avoiding the hardships that are incidental to human life are really asking that the Cross be taken out of the Christian faith. I should like to put this as strongly as I can, because, as it seems to me, some of the renewed in-

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

terest in prayer and in the devotional and the spiritual life in our day has frequently led many good people far away from true Christian prayer. It would be invidious to mention the names of popular books which commend prayer and set forth techniques of praying, but are so alien to the whole Christian position—although written sometimes by ministers of Christian bodies—that it is astounding that they are accepted so readily by people who profess and call themselves Christians. Prayer as a device for securing business success, prayer as a way of insuring that you will sell your customer, prayer as a method of getting mental security when the world is in hell, devices to find an easy peace of mind and the like, bear no relationship, so far as I can see, to authentic Christian prayer. They are a variety of a modern heresy which you can call, alternatively, Christian Science, New Thought, or any other of the cults that seem to commend themselves to those whom the Christian Church apparently does not help. There can be no doubt that the blame, to some degree at least, attaches to the Church, in that most Christian people, even Episcopalians, have had very little training in prayer as the masters of prayer have known it. It is inevitable, therefore, that they will turn for help to the places where help may be found, and if that help is called by some quasi-Christian name, naturally they will assume that it is a Christian presentation. But far too often it is not.

CAN PRAYER BE ANSWERED?

I should come back, then, to my insistence that Christian prayer is to take its meaning from our Lord's words, is to be seen as the relating of our wills to God's Will, as the opening of our lives so that God's life may enter in, as the elevation of our personalities to God. God is at work throughout His world. Every moment and every place is an occasion for us to meet Him, to know Him, to serve Him. What were called by Père de Caussade "the sacraments of the present moment" will be our most effective way of encountering God. The given situation of home and office and store and school, and the places where we live and work, the people whom we meet, the duties that are laid upon us in the course of our daily life, these are the occasions for our knowing God. And what we can do in prayer is to take these occasions and lift them, as we lift ourselves, into the presence of God. There they will be blessed, as they find their meaning in relationship to Him, and we shall be enabled to live according to God's holy Will.

Of all the collects in the Prayer Book, that for the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity happens to be my favorite. I know of no prayer which so admirably expresses the deep meaning of true Christian devotion. Let me repeat it to you and then examine it with you.

Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain that which thou dost promise, make us

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

to love that which thou dost command; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Give unto us the increase of faith—the habit of living faithfully, committed utterly to God, and to the love and service of His children.

Give unto us the increase of hope—not wistful desire for what is round the corner or over the hill, but the habit of living with tip-toe expectancy in the sure confidence that God has in store for us more than we can conceive or know.

Give unto us the increase of charity—the habit of living with loving concern for our God and for our fellows under God.

That we may obtain that which thou dost promise—What is that? The perfect enjoyment of God, delight in Him, happiness which comes from proper functioning as a man who is a child of God with his brethren who are children of God.

That which God doth promise—that we may obtain it, we pray, make us to love. Make us to love; move in upon us, work through us, put pressure on our little selfish lives, so that we may love “that which thou dost command”—the things, the places, the times, the persons, the circumstances in which God has sent us, the whole realm of the divine ordering of things. Make us to love this and in this to see God’s gracious hand at work—and all of this through Christ, in His

Spirit, by His Grace, through His mediation of the divine charity.

That is what Christian prayer is all about; and when we have grasped this, the problems which at first may have troubled us about answers to prayer fade into insignificance, and we can remember the great words of St. Francis de Sales: "we seek not the consolations of God, but the God of consolation." Having Him as the secret of our lives, sought and found in prayer, we have everything.

5

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?

NONE of our questions is so real, so poignantly real, as this one. For it is not of ourselves that most of us are thinking when we ask it; rather, it is of others, especially of those whom we have loved. Can it be that death, grim as it is, brings to a close the beauty of life as we have seen it in those loved ones? Or is there something more, so that this life is but part of that wonderful fellowship with others which is, for most of us, the best and dearest and richest of our experiences?

The Christian faith is explicit on this point. It affirms with a sure confidence that death is not the end; that there is more; that the fellowship which we have here enjoyed is not ended when those we love have died. On the contrary, it declares that God has prepared such good things for those who love Him that no words of ours can describe, for eye hath not seen nor ear heard the fullness of the destiny which is ours.

But only ours "in Him." For Christianity has not built the case for life after death on philosophical

demonstrations, like Socrates' argument for immortality on the ground that the soul is one and therefore indestructible. Nor yet has it built the case on the necessity for some balancing beyond death of the goods and ills which we suffer here. It has not even been much impressed by arguments from so-called psychical research, true as some of the results of those studies may be. The Christian affirmation is based on two basic Christian assurances. The first is the one stated by our Lord, Jesus Christ Himself: that life in communion with God is life in communion with the *living* God, and that those who are in such communion share in His life. "They live unto him"; and what lives unto God cannot die. That is to say, because God is good and because God loves us, He grants us a participation in His life and hence a blessed confidence in Eternal Life here, now, and forever.

But the second and more important Christian assurance is that Christ Himself, our Lord and our Master, is risen from the dead. "Death hath no more dominion over him"; and in that *He* lives, we who are "in Christ," as St. Paul puts it, have been given a share in His conquest of death. No matter how we may interpret the evidence in the last chapters of the Gospels, in the Acts of the Apostles, and in St. Paul's and in St. John's writings, one thing is perfectly plain: the first Christians knew with absolute certainty that Jesus Christ could not be, and was not, "holden of

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

death.” They knew Him as alive from the dead, in the full integrity of His human nature as also in the full reality of His divine nature. And so they went out to preach and to live the Gospel of the Resurrection: Christ is risen from the dead and is become “the first fruits of them that sleep.”

So the Christian answer to the question “What happens after death?” is that God, in His gracious love for men, will and does re-create human personality as He first created it in His image—and although we, by our sin, have spoiled that image, yet by God’s loving work for us and in us, we may be “re-made” in the image and, reflecting God’s likeness, live eternally in His presence, with our brethren, in the glory of the Heavenly City.

Now the Christian statements about this subject are given us in a set of symbols, often called the Last Things. They concern Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. But they also concern the fulfilment of God’s purpose in the whole Creation and not just in human life: they include the very world itself, the stuff of material things as well as the stuff of human personality. Let us not forget that they are pictures, not literally, prosy statements such as one might find in scientific discourse. They are pictures, symbols, because it is only by such that we, who are men, could understand; and they are necessary, too, because

they speak imaginatively, not prosaically, and call forth our own rich imaginative response.

Let us see what the symbols, the pictures, are really saying.

We die. And death is not just an unimportant incident in a man's life. Death is the end of our life here; but more significantly death is the measure of our human situation. We are mortal men. Death teaches us that we must live as men who know that we are not to live here forever; we pass this way but once. Hence death should be approached by us with high seriousness, not dismissed or disguised or forgotten. For us who are Christians, this means that we must be those who are never afraid to die, never afraid to meet God. We must be ready.

And after death, the Judgment. Here it is very important to remember that our language about the Last Things is symbolic, not literal. It is poetry, but the poetry of religious discourse is truer than the prose of scientific statement. So judgment is conceived in pictures. We are to be judged, we say. But this is not a legal matter; it is an appraisal of us, individually, in terms of the value of our life in this world. "We shall be judged," Saint John of the Cross says, "by love." What has this life of mine amounted to? God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, knows more than I do about my life; and if I am sure that the God who

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

will appraise me is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I can be sure that the appraisal will be both generous *and* searching. I shall not "get away with anything," but I shall be appraised with charity rather than with abstract and cold "justice."

Yet our little human lives, individually speaking, are but part of the totality of God's Creation. There are millions who have lived and will live on this planet; there may be millions of persons elsewhere in this vastness of God's Creation; there is the natural world itself, from star dust to starry nebulae. How does it all measure up to God's purpose in creation? How has it all contributed to that purpose, by which everything has come to be, and towards which everything is intended to point? Here we are thinking of what theologians call the *Last* Judgment. But in that over-all appraisal, where do *I* fit in? what have *I* done, in the context of the whole magnificent plan and purpose of God? how have *I* played *my* part? It is of these things that the final Judgment is the symbolic picture.

Yet note that in that picture we are not thought of as "souls" only. We are total personalities, compact of soul *and* body, so that one cannot be thought of without implying the other. The Christian Church says that immortality of the soul *may be* a fact; it says that resurrection of the body *is* a fact. But by "resurrection of the body," the Church does not mean that the chemicals which make up my physical body will

be restored and raised to glory. It means that all that I have lived, experienced, and done “in my body”—and that is everything I do, experience, and live—is so much a part of my total self that in the re-creation of that self by God there is some continuing instrument or organ of experience which makes possible for me both personal existence and also participation with other men and life in a world which is more than just personality. We are not to look for some pale disembodied soul-existence, but for a rich, embodied life—although the “body” will be one appropriate to the heavenly state, not one fitted for a world of physics and chemistry.

Notice, though, that in the symbolism of the Last Things, the resurrection does not occur until “the end,” when all men will be raised together. If we take this literally, it is nonsense; it introduces temporal succession—past and present and future—into the eternal realm, and this is absurd. But the picture is an affirmation that no man lives to himself *alone*, nor to God *alone*. We are “raised” together because we live together. As the story of man’s Salvation in Scripture begins with his solitude in a garden, so it ends with his life in fellowship in the Heavenly City. We are members, one of another, in God; we live one with another, in Him, both here and forever.

So also *things* are important. The “great day” will include God’s summing up “all things” in Himself.

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

The stuff of this material world is somehow to be transformed. What it means to God, what purposes He had in its creation, what values He achieved through it, will all be "saved," too, as we are "saved." That is why the pictures of the City include pearly gates and streets of gold, to symbolize the reality of *things* and their value to God. Thus personality and the things which are its environment will be taken to God, transformed and made new, and God will be all in all.

When we die, however, we are not perfect. We are not prepared for the vision of God, for we are still in selfishness and sin. So it is that the Church, building upon some passages in Scripture, pictures a state of preparation short of Heaven, where our gold is to be refined, our dross consumed. Once again we must not think of this mechanically, or as if we had a blueprint upon which we can chart the progress of the personality towards God. Rather we must say, in simple confidence, that those whom we have trusted to God are safe in His hands, that He will prepare them as He sees fit for His open presence, and that we may pray for them—as we believe they pray for us—that they may go on towards Him.

If we have in us any of the stuff of goodness, God will indeed take us to Himself, in fellowship with our brethren, in a City where He reigns and where we may reign with Him. If we have no such stuff of

goodness, we are, in fact, alienated from God—alienated by our own choice and desire, for we hate God and God's ways. The former is Heaven; the latter, Hell. Who is in Hell we do not know—maybe nobody. But no man or woman can be so easy-going about his own life, his own moral responsibility, his own opportunity to serve God and the brethren, that he can forget the awful possibility that he may, by willful choice, elect alienation from God rather than fulfillment in God. That is why we must always pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and, to our last day in this vale of soul-making, as Keats called it (I should rather say "personality-making"), live responsibly, seriously, faithfully; although we must also—because we are Christians and possess the Christian hope—live joyfully and gratefully.

6

WHY DO WE WORSHIP CHRIST?

WHY do we worship Christ? This question governs all we have said so far. All we have considered finds its proper meaning and receives true significance from the phrase, "Our Lord Jesus Christ is to be worshiped and glorified."

The best approach to an answer to this question comes from Melancthon: "To know Christ is to know His benefits rather than His natures." We *do* want to know Christ's nature—God and Man. But the approach is right. To know Christ's benefits means to know what Christ does for us and thus to know who Christ is. To know who Christ is, is to discover why we adore Him.

What does He do for us? Let us answer this not in conventional theological language, for conventional theological language is often meaningless to people. Let us consider three things, in a non-theological way, about the benefits of Christ.

First, Christ has brought and does bring God near to us. He makes God available. Most people

WHY DO WE WORSHIP CHRIST?

in most places at most times have felt God remote. They felt He was far off in Heaven and unconcerned with the details of human life. But through Christ we know that God, the Creator of the world, who governs the affairs of nations, is also close at hand so that we may know Him well. Those who had companied with Jesus Christ in Palestine, those who knew Him, felt God was near in Him and through Him. This experience is not confined to the New Testament, nor to the first century. Whenever men and women have come into a relationship of obedience, service, and love to Jesus Christ, they have found that in Him, God who seems far off is made close at hand.

Secondly, Christ provides for us a center around which and in which our lives may find a new integration. Here is a perennial experience. Those who find life in Him—those who discover service to Him and worship of Him—will testify to the fact which Clement of Alexandria expresses so well: “Our sunsets are turned into sunrises.” There is a new way of living, a new relationship to God and to our fellow men, a new hope, a new possibility in us. A disoriented, confused, frustrated, troubled, lost person can find a new center of meaning—a new power for living in the Man of Nazareth. This is written all over the pages of the New Testament, and is as true today as it was then.

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

By providing us with One whom we may love and serve without reservation, Christ delivers us from self centeredness, that turning-in upon ourselves which is the root-meaning of human sin. A Scottish preacher said that Christ provides for us a Person for whom we can care, and thereby can experience the "expulsive power of a new affection." This means to be taken "out of oneself," to be turned away from concern for our little ego, to care for Another whom we may indeed care for without fear of being "let down." He gives us release and makes us free. He opens up incredible resources for human living. The impossible becomes possible. Our lives are made new. Men and women are enabled to live as the sons and daughters of God. By providing the deliverance from self-centeredness, Christ opens up to us possibilities never known to us before.

Through Christ there is a height and depth in life made available to a humdrum man or woman who has never climbed mountains nor descended into the depths. There is the opening up of enormous resources. A St. Francis throws away all he possesses and marries Lady Poverty. He walks the dusty roads of Italy—"having nothing, yet possessing all things." St. Thomas Aquinas explores with insight and understanding the mysteries of the Divine Being. Sir Wilfred Grenfell goes to Labrador and Dr. Schweitzer goes to Africa. Christ makes us do the things we

WHY DO WE WORSHIP CHRIST?

thought no one ever could do—sometimes in small yet significant ways. The greatest results come from these tiniest beginnings. He purges us of our self-centeredness by providing a worthy center for our devotion.

When we are confronted with these facts of the benefits of Christ, we are compelled to ask the question, “Who can this be?”

The token of man as a reasoning being is the desire to know the meaning of things—to understand. Theologians are not pedantic people who go apart and devise schemes to complicate life, for everybody is a theologian. Every person tries to understand, and to state to himself or others, what he finds to be the meaning of life. The kind of theology you hold is determined by that which you take to be of supreme importance. Now Christian theologians find their focus in Christ. They made him their point of departure. They know Jesus Christ and His benefits, and they try to explain the world in terms of Christ, with Him as their clue. They try to relate Him to the world in which they live and to relate Him to the rest of their human experience. It took the Church three hundred years to work its way through to a formal answer to the question, “Who is Christ?”—but it takes only a moment’s encounter with Christ Himself for a simple believer to find the whole meaning of life.

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

When St. Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" he was simply giving a transcript of experience. Confronted by Christ, finding God available through Him, delivered by Him from sin, and discovering the possibility of new life in His strength, men and women cannot but cry, "My Lord and my God!"

Those three hundred years were not wasted time. They were spent in an effort to discover ways of stating faith in Jesus Christ—ways to guard it from distortion and error. In the year 325, the Church at the Council of Nicea affirmed the deity of Jesus in unmistakable terms. They did not use nouns indiscriminately. Not merely was the deity of Christ affirmed, but also His true humanity. The "heresy of the pious" is monophysitism (i.e., that Jesus was God but never truly man). We ought to be grateful to the misguided liberals who over-emphasized the humanity of Christ. They recalled us all to the warmth of the human life really lived in Palestine. If it be true that through the wounds of Christ's humanity we come to an understanding of divinity, we are marring the Christian experience if we lose sight of the fact. The answer given by many people who *think* they are orthodox is "that Christ is God," and they leave it at that. But this is not what the Church has said; neither has Christian experience. Both the Church and experience say, "In Him *God* and *man* are at one"—and

each of those terms is as important as the other. We say, then, that because of what Jesus Christ does for men, the Church has been compelled to affirm that deity and humanity meet and are married in Him, in a union undissoluble and fruitful for all who are enabled to know Him.

How shall we understand the unity of God and man in Jesus Christ? Not by minimizing the reality of human life; certainly not by thinking that He had no human mind and soul, that He lacked human emotions, and that His human mind was omniscient and His human strength omnipotent. We shall succeed in making Him an incredible figure if we show Him as a man who does not share the limitations of human nature. Neither shall we rightly understand Christ if we play down the deity and imply that when we call Him divine we mean little more by the word than does the young man who uses this word for the lady of his affections.

Christ was not just a very good man and that only. Some have said that He demonstrates His deity in His power to do mighty works; and they use miracles as a proof of His being God. But His miracles would prove not His deity but His extraordinary power. The mystery of Christ is the union in Him of God and man, of true deity and true humanity.

Look at any instance of human life. Every man is related to God in some fashion. God created us and

uses us. We depend on Him. God has His purpose for each of us and we respond to a greater or less degree. God woos us and we respond with a glimmer of love to Him. But here in Christ we have an instance of human life which from the first moment, and at every point, was an agent of God—a vehicle for God's expression that is entirely His own. His human life was not lived sporadically or spasmodically with God, but was always and at every moment linked with God. Here we see how One who is truly a man can also be a true instrument and agent of God's presence—God's very self in human experience. If we let our right hand stand for God and the left hand stand for man, and then bring the two together, but part them again and again, this broken and temporary union is a fact of all human life. We are touched by God for a moment, obedient to God for a time, loving and serving God just a little bit. Suppose that the hands are clinched tight, the two as one and remaining as one, God working through man and man ever obedient to God. That is Christ—He in whom God and man are in union, one with another, now and forever. This tells us why we worship Christ. We can worship God, and God only. We may venerate the saints, but worship belongs to God and to Him alone. Unless we can say that in and through Jesus Christ, God is at one with men through this Man, we shall be guilty of idolatry if we worship

WHY DO WE WORSHIP CHRIST?

Him. But if God and man are one in Him, we can and must worship Him.

Only because of that which Christ does can the Christian affirm:

This man is more than man!

This man is at one with God!

God acts in Him and God comes in Him!

Only because of that can we dare to worship Him.

We do worship Him. When we worship Him we do not feel at all that He comes between God and us, as if a wall were erected between our Creator and our little selves. We feel when we worship Him that we are worshiping God in Him and Him in God, for they are as one. We look at Him and say of Him, as St. Thomas did, "My Lord and my God!"

All this can be summed up in a story from William Hazlett's "Table Talk." A group of friends were discussing great men they would like to have known. At the end, Charles Lamb said in his stammering voice: "After all these I can think of but one Other. If Shakespeare were to come in we should all of us rise to our feet and wish to take his hand. If the Other should come in we should all of us fall on our knees and seek to kiss the hem of His garment."

Why do we worship Christ? Because we cannot help it.

Section Two

7

THE UNITY OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER WITH BELIEF AND PRACTICE

MAN differs in many ways from other animals who inhabit this planet. For example, he is, as St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out, the creature who laughs. More seriously, he is the animal who can reason, who has the power of self-transcendence and the capacity to make choices which he regards to some degree at least as free choices. He has forethought, so that he can act purposively with a longer range of the future before him than any other animal that we know. He is a creature who, like all others, is mortal but who is unique because he *knows* that he is mortal; man is the animal who is aware of death and therefore is able to “prepare” for it by living in terms which allow for a recognition of mortality.

But there is still another distinction about man. He is the animal who worships God. If some visitor from another planet, knowing nothing at all about this world of ours, should drop down upon us, he would surely find that the biped who was erect had

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

a peculiar characteristic marking his behavior—he would observe this creature on his knees in what the creature called “the presence of the invisible God.” He would see the animal, man, engaged in prayer, addressing the mysterious Reality who created him, and entering (as the man would say) into communion with that Reality. He would observe gatherings of human beings for the express purpose of the adoration of their God. Man is not only the reasoning, purposive, consciously mortal, laughing animal; he is the worshipping animal.

So much a part of man's being and so much a part of his history has his worship been, that any account of human life and any attempt to understand it that fails to reckon with this fact is by that very token a partial and even a mistaken account. Indeed, one of the failures in much contemporary explanation of human life—as, for example, by some of our modern secular sociologists—is precisely at this point. They attempt to describe the human situation and to prescribe for its betterment without regard for the worshipful orientation of man towards the ultimate Mystery. Hence their descriptions and prescriptions have a certain shallowness and superficiality which even a slight acquaintance with, say, the Greek tragedies would have corrected. In an important symposium, published not so long ago, which dealt with the present crisis of the human mind, every area

THE UNITY OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER

of experience was explored, save one. The index to the book showed one entry under the heading "Religion," none under the heading "Worship." And the entry under *Religion* turned out to be a dismissal of the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr on the ground that he insists on man as "sinner," without (as the author said) allowing for the supposed fact that recent investigation into the area of child psychology has demonstrated that by proper adjustment to family and society in the first few years of a child's existence, man's tendency to egocentric behavior can quite satisfactorily be corrected and a genuine altruism substituted for it. The superficiality of that statement—even its banality—would seem to be obvious, but our purpose here is simply to note that this was the solitary reference to man the "religious animal," man the worshiper, in the course of six or seven hundred pages of thorough analysis of the human creature in society.

For our part, we recognize the plain fact—that man does worship. He worships because he *must*; there is some drive in human personality that forces him to go out of himself in adoration of that which is other than himself. And if he fails to direct this towards God, he will divert it to that which theologians call a "creature." He will worship some object, some person, some thing—at worst, he will objectify himself and worship that—which then becomes for

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

him his "god." So in our own day we have had the state or race or people made into an object of worship; we have had humanity itself set before us as the end of our striving and the object of our total devotion. In some countries, the nation or what is called its "way of life," or the values for which it stands, is put in this supreme place; hymns are sung to suchlike, and the devotion of its citizens is directed to it as to the supreme reality which must receive the entire adoration of those who "belong."

Now Christianity is a religion which cannot rest content with any such creature-worship, or idolatry. Its claim is that the only Object worthy of man's worship and adequate to serve as the center of his life of devotion is the Reality that is ultimate—God Himself. He is the only God whom it is *safe* to worship, in the sense that He and He alone, as the final Meaning of things, and their ultimate Source, can be given adoration without in the long run disappointing and frustrating His worshipers, without bringing them, indeed, to self-destruction. It is with Christian worship that we are to be concerned in these lectures—worship as it has been understood in the great Christian tradition, in its broad mainstream down through the past two thousand years. But first of all we must understand what Christianity is, so that we can see the way in which Christian worship is both a part of, and an expression of, the total Christian *thing*.

THE UNITY OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER

What is Christianity? Primarily it is a Gospel—a proclamation which implies a response. That is to say, it is a religion which finds its center in what purports to be a revelation of eternal Reality to man. Now “revelation” is to a considerable degree a “weasel-word,” to use a term employed nowadays by some of the semanticists; that is, it is a word which is susceptible of many meanings and which therefore must be defined if we are to grasp the significance which it possesses for Christians. Within the great Christian tradition, revelation does not primarily suggest the disclosure of a set of truths—be they ethical or religious or philosophical—that give information to men about their actual behavior or their ideal behavior, or even about the nature of the universe and the meaning which it may possess. In the first instance, revelation means for the Christian the action of God. It means that the eternal Reality has done and is doing something; it means activity in the historical realm.

The reason for this Christian understanding of revelation is to be discovered in the historical background of Christianity itself. The Christian religion is rooted in the Hebraic tradition, of which the Old Testament is our primary record. And dominant in those Hebrew documents is the conception of God as the living God, the God who *does things*. For the Jew, God is not an idea or an ideal; He is a living

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

Being, with a purpose which He is effecting in His Creation. He is not only the Source and Explanation of the universe in a metaphysical sense; He is the undergirding and moving Power which energizes ceaselessly in and through all things. Towards the fulfilment of His purposes He has brought man into being and He offers to His human children the privilege of co-operating with Him so that they may have a share in the effecting of these ends and, at the same time, find a supreme joy for themselves as they are related to Him and participate in His communication of life.

This is by no means the whole of the Jewish understanding of God, for it insufficiently stresses the righteousness of the Lord of Creation. But for our present purpose it will serve to indicate why it is that Christian thought has never been content to rest in a conception of God as the ideal Reality, the supreme Value or Constellation of values, the absolute Mind, or any such idealistic view. The very terms of Christian thought are set by the Hebrew insistence on the living God. So it follows that the notion of God's revelation, as Christians believe it, must be understood always through the great Hebrew affirmations—this, in fact, is why the early Church refused to cut the Gospel of Jesus Christ loose from its moorings in the Old Testament, and why such thinkers as sought to

do this, like Marcion and other Gnostic writers, were condemned as perverters of the faith.

God *acts*. He acts in a more general or pervasive fashion through the ordinary run of events, the normal processes of nature and history, the emergence of prophets and teachers in all races and at all times. Thus it is possible to secure, from a consideration of "general revelation," some knowledge of Him and His ways. Such knowledge is good and true so far as it goes, but its very variety and its wide diffusion make it impossible for it to be used as giving a determinative disclosure of the divine nature and the divine purpose in the world. If man is to have such a definitive and normative understanding, there must be some definitive *act*, some norm which is *expressed* in the course of his historical experience, that will "set the note" and establish the criterion in the light of which all else is to be understood and evaluated. In other words, some particular action or set of actions in the historical realm—which is the realm in which man actually lives and from which his concrete existential knowledge is drawn—must be seen to be "important" in the most profound sense of that word. For something is "important," in the deepest way, when it becomes the clue to everything else—when it is, so to say, the lens through which all else is seen and by which all else is understood. To put it in traditional theological terms, special revelation is

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

necessary if general revelation is properly to be grasped and its significance known.

Now it is the peculiar claim of Christianity that the life of Jesus Christ, in its complete sense, is the "special revelation" of God. Here, the Christian affirms, God is "in action," in a degree and fashion elsewhere unknown. Here, set in the midst of a general and pervasive revelatory action of God, is a particular and an intensive action; here God is singularly and specially at work. In Jesus Christ, prepared for through the long preceding development of Jewish religion, and His meaning apprehended through the long centuries of subsequent Christian experience, man is given a vivid and striking disclosure of the eternal Reality; and given it not through the retailing of information but through the whole content of a Life. God meets man, not on the level of intellectual discovery and comprehension, but in a living fashion, in the rich intercourse of Life with life. All that has taken place elsewhere can now be seen in a fresh way, as the work of the same God who for us men and for our wholeness of life was made man in the life of a brother Man. Furthermore, because this has occurred in the sphere of human experience, men are related in a new way to God as a consequence of God's relating Himself in a new way with them. A new relationship is established between God and man, indeed between God and His whole Creation. There

THE UNITY OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER

was God *and* man; now there is also Jesus Christ, in whom God and man are so inextricably and personally united—united in act and not only in thought—that the very conditions of the divine-human relationship, and, by implication and application, the situation in which human life itself is lived in relationship to God, are different from what they were before, or from what they would be apart from, this fact. History is no longer the same; for history is now the history which includes Jesus Christ and all that He was and is, and did and does.

Something like this, then, is the heart of the Christian claim about Jesus Christ. This is the Gospel; in the word so popular in theological circles today, this is the *Kerygma*, or Proclamation. It is stated over and over again, in different terms, in the New Testament: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself"; "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Christianity is a Gospel.

But it is a Gospel that implies a response. If it be true that God has done these things, as the Christian proclamation declares, then it follows that man must react to the divine action. His response finds expression primarily in a society, a fellowship, called into being as men and women answered back to the action of God upon them in Christ. The Christian religion, as distinguished from the Christian *Gospel*,

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

is the responsive movement of men to the incarnate and redeeming work of Christ. And it is a responsive movement which is embodied in a *community*. The whole of the New Testament is witness to this. For what happened, as a result of the coming of Christ, was not in the first instance the development of intellectual propositions or even of moral ideas, but the knitting into fellowship of a group of men and women who knew *whom* they believed, not *what* they believed. The *what* of Christian belief is an attempt to state all that is implied in the *whom* of Christian belief; and the history of the Christian Church may be read, at least in part, as the constant effort of succeeding generations of believers in Christ to think out and think through the full implications of the new relationship to God established in Christ and enjoyed in the fellowship of Christian believers in Him. The Church is the sphere in which Christian faith is known and Christian life experienced; it is the area in which men and women, captivated by the dynamic appeal of the Lord Christ, respond to that Lord and find their little human existence redeemed and enriched and made significant. It is in this sense that we may rightly affirm that the Christian Church is itself a part of the total Christian Reality; and no one can enter into and experience the Christian fact unless he is part and parcel of the ongoing responsive life of the Christian Church.

But what has all this to do with worship? We seem to have gone a long way round to arrive at our major topic. Yet it was necessary to do this, for we shall never understand what Christian worship is all about unless we first have given it its right setting in the life of the Christian community itself. For Christian worship is one of the articulations, or expressions, of the Christian communal response to the action of the living God in Christ; and this, which is perhaps more obviously true of the public worship of Christians, is also equally true of their private devotions. We who are Christians always worship God, pray to Him, and are in communion with Him, as those who by their incorporation into the total Christian response are of and with our brethren in the faith in Christ. Christian prayer, in all its ranges, is never an individual thing; it is *personal*, certainly, in that it is *my* prayer, but it is always *my* prayer as one of a family of believers who share together in the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and are thereby, in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, assured of the love of God.

Within the Christian community, worship is one of the ways of response to God in Christ. It is not the only way of response. The faith which informs the Christian's life, by virtue of which he can say "I believe in . . ." is another and essential part, as is also the orientation of the totality of one's existence towards God manifested in the daily course of life—in

what we call Christian behavior. To believe as a Christian, to live as a Christian, to worship as a Christian—all are necessary for the full-orbed expression of one's response to God in His decisive, life-giving action in our Lord. The Service of Holy Baptism, in the Book of Common Prayer, states this admirably when it requires that the sponsors in Baptism promise, on behalf of the child, that the newly baptized Christian shall "learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments," and describes these, among other things, as being that which "a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health." The Creed stands for the total faith of a Christian as he responds to Christ; the Lord's Prayer for his worship and prayer; and the Ten Commandments, interpreted of course in the light of Jesus' summary of "The Law," for the moral life which is also, like faith and worship, response to God as we meet and know Him in Christ.

We shall be studying, in a later chapter, the peculiar genius of Christian worship, that makes it genuinely Christian. For the moment we are concerned to point out the way in which the faith, life, and worship of a Christian man or woman are inter-related. As the Christian believes, so he prays; as he prays, so he believes. There is an old maxim of the Church which expresses this idea: *lex orandi lex credendi*—the rule for praying is the rule for believing. And

that proposition, unlike some others, is what the logicians would call "reversible." It can just as well be stated conversely—that the rule for believing is the rule for praying. The ancient Athanasian Creed, in which high theology is given formal expression, has a remarkable verse which makes the same point: "This is the Catholic Faith: that we worship God-head in Trinity and Trinity in Unity." *This* is the faith: that we *worship*. And the original meaning of the word which now suggests sound theology—the word "orthodoxy"—is "right praise." To praise God aright, to give Him the proper worship: this is the meaning of right belief. It is not very difficult to understand what is meant by such assertions. For it is eternally true—and by now we ought all to recognize it—that "as a man believes in his heart, so is he." The deepest beliefs which we hold, the ones that actually lie far down in the grounds of our being, are the beliefs which determine our personality and make us what we are. So it is that in our worship, when we seek to relate our little human lives to the eternal Reality of God, we reflect that by which in fact we truly live. We worship God as He is revealed to us in Christ, with all of the richness of that revelation brought to bear upon our attempts to respond in devotion to the God who moves out towards us in boundless charity. We see God in terms of Christ; we adore Him under that same representation. This,

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

of course, is why Christian worship must necessarily be different from all other; and it is why the Christian's view of the world cannot be reduced to the level of the generally—and vaguely—"religious."

On the other hand, it is equally true that the way in which we worship will go far to determine the life which we live. If we center our devotion on the nation, for instance, we may be excellent Americans or Britons or Frenchmen, but we shall not by that token become Christians. If we give our highest praise to the human race and its supposed possibilities for self-expression, we shall perhaps become faithful citizens of the "City of Man," but we shall not become loyal subjects in the City of God. Indeed, it might be said that we shall be less excellent Americans or Britons or Frenchmen, less admirable members of the human race as a whole, if we are content with an object of devotion less than Almighty God himself. For we shall be inclined, if not certainly driven, to put temporary and proximate "goods" in the place belonging only to the absolute Good which is God; and as a result we shall attempt to live without regard for that last and ultimate environment which is the only "safe" context for all other values and goals that we may set ourselves. We shall, in fact, become provincial in a very genuine sense, losing sight of the ultimacies in existence while we are intent on concentrating on the immediacies. One might say

that we shall commit the sin of racial egotism, even if we are delivered from the sin of individual egotism—although for my own part, I would think that the two are very closely related if they are not, indeed, different expressions of the same sinful pride on man's part. Worship and prayer, if directed to God Himself, can, in the Abbé Bremond's fine phrase, "disinfect us of self." They can give us a perspective higher than the merely human one, an attitude towards life which is more inclusive than our own petty one. They can relate us, at least in part, with the finalities of existence and so equip us to live more like true men and less like highly sophisticated yet inevitably limited animals.

So we have here a three-fold cord which may not be broken. Our faith, our worship, and our life are all knit together in the fact of our Christian membership in the Church which is the Body of Christ; they are all part of our total response to the revelation of God in Christ and so they play, each one of them, an indispensable part in our movement of return to the God who is our Creator. Out of the infinite mystery by which our tiny human lives are surrounded have come intimations of the inner quality of the creative Reality upon whom we depend; He moves in upon us to awaken and then to deepen our returning movement towards Him. In Jesus Christ, the eternal Reality has crowned what von Hügel called His "many

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

preveniences and incarnations" by an action which is intensive and distinctive, in the whole richness of a human life united inextricably with his own. And here more than at any other point we are incited to a response—a response which is not ours individually but ours as a fellowship of human brethren, a response which is manifested in our returning commitment to God in Christ, our thankful effort by His Grace to conform to His Will, and our selfless surrender to Him in worship. "We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord."

8

THE NATURE OF WORSHIP

WORSHIP, we have seen, is an indestructible element in human experience; and in the Christian tradition it is inextricably associated with the faith and the moral life of the believers in the community that responds to the action of the living God in Christ. It is now necessary for us to consider more particularly the nature of worship, both in its general sense and in the specifically Christian one.

The word "worship," as has often been remarked, is a shortening of "worth-ship." It implies the ascribing of worth or value to that which is esteemed as deserving of such an attitude. There is a sense in which it may be used, and used properly, of human beings in their relationships one with another. In the marriage service in the English Prayer Book, the groom says to the bride, "With my body I thee worship." By this he indicates his respectful, indeed reverential, attitude towards his future wife; and the use of the words "with my body" suggests an even deeper truth, with which we shall be concerned presently—namely, that it is with the totality of human personality, including the body itself, that the act of wor-

ship is offered. But the word *worship* has normally come to mean the giving of due praise to that Being who occupies the highest place in the hierarchy of valued realities, to God or to the object or person who in "idolatrous" religions acts as surrogate for God.

In classical theology a distinction is made in the kinds of veneration or reverence which may be given by man to others. There is first of all "*dulia*," or the reverence which may be paid to men who, by virtue of their "holiness," are regarded as dwelling-places for the Spirit of God. By extension, such *dulia* may be paid to all men, as being potentially "saints." Tertullian said, "When you see your brother, you see your Lord"; for every son of man, more particularly those who, by Baptism, have been incorporated into the mystical Body of Christ, may be venerated as one in whom God's Spirit dwells.

There is a second kind of veneration, called "*hyperdulia*," which is applied to the highest human nature—chiefly to the sacred Humanity of our Lord, Jesus Christ Himself. So intimately is His Manhood united with Godhead that the Humanity itself, says traditional theology, is deserving of a supreme reverence, although it is only the Godhead incarnate in Jesus who may be given absolute worship. In some circles the Blessed Mother of our Lord is also held to be worthy of such special veneration, or *hyperdulia*,

yet she is never regarded as worshipful in the same sense in which God alone is to be worshiped.

This brings us to the third category, "latreia," or absolute worship. In all branches of Christianity such absolute worship is to be given to God and to God only. This is that supreme adoration which involves the total offering of self to the almighty Source of life, the ultimate and eternal Reality. And it is with this that we are here to be concerned. The lesser kinds of reverence have been noted only in order that we may be quite clear that even in Catholic circles the term *worship* is applied normally to God and none other, although it is important that we understand that by association with God and His presence and work, creatures are seen in the Christian tradition as worthy of something even more remarkable than the respect for personality of which democracy has spoken—they are worthy of reverence which is religious in quality, reverence about which there is a mystery, just as in human personality itself there is a deep mystery by reason of its being grounded in the mystery of God.

In the first place then, worship is the offering to God of that praise which rightly belongs to Him. The words in the *Gloria in excelsis* express this: "We give thanks to thee for thy great glory." So highly exalted, so wonderfully holy, so altogether supreme and mighty in His majesty is God the ultimate Real-

ity, that men are drawn to ascribe all praise to Him. It is not only the developed religions which have felt this compulsion; all men everywhere, insofar as they are at all religious, are driven to acts of worship, even if for sophisticated thought, the god or gods whom they worship do not seem adequate to man's need. In the presence of that which they regard as supreme, men are impelled to fall down and adore, in however crude and (as it seems to us) barbarous a way.

Furthermore, such worship tends to have a cultic quality—it is a social action, in which the particular race or tribe makes its act of adoration. This may be delegated to special representatives, but the whole group is involved in their rites; and frequently the tribe itself participates, as in a ritual dance or some other ceremony which is regarded as worship. Personal devotion may have its place, but this is never seen as substitute for the cultic act itself.

Worship has always included, in however tenuous a form, a rich variety of elements. Adoration or sheer praise is central. But closely associated with this is thanksgiving—the expression of gratitude to the god for his gifts to men. Again, in men's acts of worship, there is place for acknowledgment of human failure, for sin, for violation of the taboos which it is thought that the god has imposed. In the sight of the reality to whom adoration and thanksgiving are given, the worshiper feels his own imperfection and asks that

he may be restored to the free intercourse with the deity which that imperfection has broken or damaged. Finally, worship includes prayer made on behalf of self and others—whether it be persons or causes dear to the group, victory in battle, the obtaining of desired goods, restoration to health in illness, and the like, or whether it be that the worshipers themselves seek such gifts as they may feel necessary or desirable, like long life, particular goods which will be of help to them, or simply the grace of communion with their god.

We ought to note that the dominant motif of worship, at almost every level, is the offering of self to god or the gods; it is not the attempt to conform the god or gods to the will of his devotees. In the early days of anthropological investigation, many students thought that they had reduced religion to magic. It seemed to them that the cult actions of the tribe in worship, in ceremonial and rite, the dance and the incantation, were ways in which the tribal god, or whatever other deity was the object of the action, was coerced into obedience to the desires of those who participated. But more profound investigation and more sympathetic understanding of the primitive groups, as well as a deeper penetration into the meaning of more sophisticated worship, have made it clear to the majority of anthropologists that there is a very real distinction between magic and worship. In magic,

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

the tribe attempts precisely to coerce the nature of things; in religion, the tribe seeks rather to enter into such relations with its deity that enhanced life may be enjoyed and health and soundness may be established. It may be that the same individual acts both as "medicine man" and "priest"; but his two functions are in some sort distinguished. We might say, compendiously, that religious worship is the attempt to conform man and the world to the god, while magic—which in this sense is really pre-science—is the attempt to conform the world to the will of man.

In a study of the nature of the Christian Eucharist, the writer has sought to show that one way in which the history of religion may be understood is as the deepening and purifying of the notion of sacrifice. For sacrifice is at the heart of all worship. Sacrifice means the offering to the god of that which is worthy of him, so that satisfactory relations may be established between the god and his worshipers. This strain runs through all religion, from the most primitive to the most highly spiritual. It is only a lack of imagination on the part of some students which has prevented them from seeing the grand sweep of the sacrificial idea and has therefore led them to a rejection of it as central to the religious life of man.

When a primitive tribe engages in an act of worship which includes human sacrifice, this may be

regarded as a barbaric and appallingly immoral action. So it is, in the light of later and higher conceptions of deity and deity's relationship to men. But from the standpoint of the primitive man, the sacrifice of a human life is rather to be seen as his attempt to offer to his deity that which he himself most highly esteems, as a token of his wish to please the god and thereby to secure that between the god and himself and his tribe a happy communion may be set up. As the race of men grows in understanding, a substitute is made for human sacrifice; the first fruits of the earth, the first-born of the flock, are offered instead. The purpose, however, is the same: that this, which is the best that the tribe possesses, may be "devoted," as the ancient Hebrews put it, to the god, for he is deserving of it, and that in consequence of this devotion, the god may look favorably upon the people and give them his good gifts.

The great achievements of the Hebrew prophets, from one point of view, were their insistence that God is not to be approached in this external fashion and their success in securing a general consent by the Jewish people to the proposition that "the sacrifices of God are a troubled spirit"—that God wishes the offering to Him of the whole life of His people, both as individuals and as a group, not for His own glorification but rather so that He might effectively use them for the accomplishment of great ends: the re-

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

demption of the world and the opening of rich life for His children. But that which the Jews came to see was God's demand upon them they were not in fact able to perform. For while men may see that it is the offering of *themselves* which is the heart of all worship, they are neither able nor willing to make this oblation. Such refusal and such incapacity are the measure of the sinfulness of man—and the Hebrew prophets, who taught the truth about sacrifice, at the same time saw the radical sin in men which prevented their doing that which alone would "please God" and result in right relationships with Him. They saw this, but they did not have the answer to it. It is the claim of the Christian faith that the answer to it can never be given by man; God alone can provide it, and in Jesus Christ He did so. But we shall see more of this in our next chapter.

Worship, then, is primarily sacrificial in kind, in the sense that it means offering to God. The adoration, thanksgiving, acknowledgment of sin, prayer for others and for self, which, as we have seen, are integral elements in the whole action of worship, have their significance in the total giving of self, so that the sovereign Will of God may be effected in worshiper and world. On the other hand, there is a returning movement in worship, from the side of the deity who is worshiped. As the devotees give themselves to their god, using some token for their obla-

tion such as a human life, an animal, grain, a dance or other ceremonial, so the god responds to their action by relating himself afresh to them in a helpful and enriching fashion. Communion is established anew, and the worshipers go out from their religious rite with enhanced strength and a sense of belonging to the god whom they have adored. Thus we may say that in the divine-human relationship, as it manifests itself in human acts of worship, there is a two-way traffic: from man to God in sacrifice or offering, and from God to man in the establishment of communion and the gift of new life.

But the significant point in advanced religion, and above all in Christianity, is that the movement from man to God is itself a responsive movement to an action of God towards man. Something of the reason for this, so far as Christianity is concerned, was discussed in Chapter 7. But in other "high religion" as well, there is a conviction that God and His purpose have priority; even in the pantheistically-weighted religions of India the "existence" of the supremely-divine, and his disclosure of himself through avatars like Krishna or Shiva, is the assumption in terms of which the average worshiper engages in his religious practice, no matter what may be said of the highly-intellectualized philosophical religious ideas of thinkers like Shankara. As Professor A. E. Taylor has insisted in *The Faith of a Moralist*, all "working"

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

religions which hold sway over the great multitude of men tend to be "revealed"; and even in primitive expressions of the religious impulse something of the idea of "revelation" is to be found. That is to say, men seem almost inevitably to discover that their urge to adore a deity, however conceived, is an urge that is elicited from them by that which the deity himself is believed to be—or more profoundly, that which it is believed that he has done towards them.

In this sense we may say of worship what the late George Tyrrell said of all religion: that there is only one worship, which begins in primitive and crude ways, grandly develops to purer conceptions, with ups and downs but yet moving forward as man himself becomes morally and spiritually more discerning, until it reaches its always-implied center in a focal and intensive expression which is, so we Christians would affirm, uniquely given in the person and the work of Jesus Christ. In Christ, God approaches man, man returns to God, and God then moves back toward men with His gift of new life in the Saviour, Christ. This conception has its relationship to the idea of "progressive revelation," in that both see that there is continuous growth and remarkable development in man's ideas of God. But it differs from that notion because of its recognition of the richness and variety in man's apprehension of God, as well as because it

discerns also that the development is by no means uniform and persistent, but has its dreadful points of failure as well as its high moments of understanding, and above all because it has been emancipated from the fallacy of the post-enlightenment period in Western history—the idea of continuous progress and “constantly-improving” morality and spirituality on the part of man. There is really no such thing as moral and spiritual progress, if by this it is meant that man at each of his later stages has improved upon each of his earlier stages. There is only the continuing relationship of man with the eternal Reality of God, opening richer vistas here and there, descending to horrible depths at this point and at that, yet moving forward spirally, as it were, until in Christ—so the Christian believes—the relationship is established on a new level of depth and profundity, as well as of height and penetration. But even here, there may be, and, indeed, there has been, appalling retrogression and degradation, for men remain the same through all ages, with an inveterate tendency to reject the best they know and a distortion of their will so that even when they do not reject the best they yet tend to seek it in their own perverted fashion.

This, which is true of man’s moral and spiritual history on the grand scale, is equally true of his worship. We can find, without too much effort, examples of reversion to very primitive ideas of offering among

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

quite sophisticated moderns; we can see, all about us, illustrations of the tendency to substitute lesser gods for the one true God; we are ourselves the victims of the temptation to desert worship itself, as even the primitives understood it in their best moments, and to turn the adoration of God into a "charm" which will, so we think, gain for us what we want—as in so many lands today, we seek to "use" God as the support or dynamic for our own national aspirations, rather than submit these to God, so that they may be purified and conformed to His holy Will.

Yet it remains the fact that there is a movement forward, and the Christian declaration is that in this, the hand of God is to be discerned as He leads His children to a deeper understanding of His nature and of His purpose for them, thereby enriching their lives and giving them the assurance that if they seek Him they will find life eternal. On the other hand, it is not the Christian idea that in the temporal end alone—on this planet where our little mortal lives are lived out—there will come the grand culmination of all things. The Christian has in his Bible the Book of Revelation; and in that bizarre and difficult document, one note is dominant—that the highest worship of which man is capable, and of which all his worship on earth is but the reflection, is the sheer adoration of God in the heavenly places, in the City of God, where there is no more night, where there is no temple, "for the

THE NATURE OF WORSHIP

glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." We may find it hard to understand the somewhat surrealistic quality of the vision which the writer of this book enjoyed; but it is the heart of the Christian hope that man's final end in worship, as in every other aspect of his experience, is to be found in that heavenly place, of which the writer says: "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

9

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

WORSHIP, as a characteristic action of man the religious animal, consists in the offering of self to God and the returning gift of enhanced life, in communion with God, for man. But the specific quality of any given act of worship is dependent upon the religious outlook of the believer and the picture of the object that is worshiped; as is the god, so is the cult. It is our next interest, therefore, to consider *Christian* worship, in order to determine what are the peculiar elements in that particular kind of cultic action.

We may recall that Christianity is in the first instance a gospel, a proclamation, in which it is declared that the eternal Reality whom men call God has crowned His endless work of self-revelation to His human children by a uniquely direct and immediate action: He has come to us in one of our own kind, the Man of Nazareth, uniting to Himself the life which, through His purpose, was conceived and born of Mary, and through this life in its wholeness establishing a new relationship to Himself into which the children of men may enter. But in the second instance,

as we have seen, Christianity is a responsive movement towards God as He is found in Christ—a movement which is communal in nature, expressed in a society that sprang into being as the result of the life, death, and, above all, the rising-again of Jesus Christ. That responsive movement which is the secret of the Christian Church's existence is articulated in three ways: through a faith by virtue of which the Christian is enabled to say, "I believe in God . . . and in Jesus Christ . . . and in the Holy Ghost"; through a life in grace, empowered by the divine aid, which has its own special quality and is called, in St. Paul's letters, the "life in Christ"; and, finally, through the worship of God under the terms of the total reality of Jesus Christ, of who He is, and of what He does.

Furthermore, we have said that it is the Christian claim that in Christ and through His power, there is effected that which men have otherwise found to be impossible, no matter how much they may have sought it—the possibility of a full and selfless offering of human life to God, in consequence of which a free communion is established between God and man in Christ. It is this which all worship seeks, wherever found—to offer perfectly to God that which of right He asks from men and to receive from Him, in return for that total self-oblation, the gift of life which is eternal.

In Christian worship, therefore, we shall expect to

find the expression of the peculiar affirmation and the special quality of the Christian faith and the responsive movement of man to God as he reacts to God's action towards him. Besides this, we shall expect to find that this expression is given in the concrete terms of human history. But above all we shall expect that it will be mediated through outward and visible things. In other words, Christian worship, if it be true to Christian faith, will be incarnational, or sacramental, in nature. For the central assertion of the Christian tradition is that the eternal Reality, invisible to human eyes, has made Himself known to men through material mediation. He has "come" to man in a human Life, using as the vehicle for His self-expression "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled."

Christianity is a sacramental religion. Through outward and visible things—through a human Life, supremely—the invisible and spiritual Reality is given to men. But this, which is true of the Christian claim, is true of men generally; men themselves are sacramental creatures. They know what they know, love what they love, do what they do, through the instrumentality of the material and by the use of their sensory apparatus. They express their love, and they come to know what it is to be loved, through the actions which are appropriate for this experience:

"I love my baby because I kiss it, and I kiss it so that I may love it more," said a great philosopher-saint of our own time. Our appreciation of beauty is made possible for us through our enjoyment of objects that are themselves beautiful. Truth is given to us through our experience of the world in which we live, with our answering meditation on that world and what its meaning may be. In every area of human experience it is normally the case that we are dependent upon the mediation of our senses, under the conditions of our "embodied-ness."

It is remarkable that this simple fact of human life fits in so closely with the pattern of the Christian interpretation of existence—so remarkable that we may be pardoned if we believe that it is not really accidental at all, but providential. Christianity fits man's real nature as hand to glove. This makes it possible for us to understand Christian worship as the culmination of all of man's striving to find a satisfactory way of integration with his God, completing and correcting the many attempts which may be seen as foreshadowings of the "good thing" which was to come.

Now a reading of the New Testament and other literature of the early Christian Church can leave no doubt that the worship of the first Christians was specifically eucharistic worship. It was worship through what has been called by many names in the

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

Christian tradition: the Lord's Supper, the Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Mysteries, the Mass. The name does not matter; what is important is that we understand that normatively in the days of Christian origins, and consistently since that time, the central action of the Christian in worship has been the doing of that which, "in the night in which he was betrayed," Jesus Christ performed. He took bread, blessed, and brake it, and gave it to His Disciples; He took the cup, blessed and distributed it. Here is the origin of the worship which is distinctively Christian.

We shall profit by a brief historical excursus at this point. Recent research has established beyond a shadow of doubt that Jewish religious practice included a large element of sacramental worship, associated with table meals of religious fellowship. It is not necessary for us to make a detailed examination of the various sorts of ritual associated with these meals; it will suffice if we see that the Jew worshiped God not only in the synagogue and in the Temple, but also in his home, where families or groups of friends met regularly for a holy supper, often held in connection with great festivals of the Jewish religious year, in which bread and wine, eaten and drunk, were believed to have a peculiar significance in establishing anew a sense of the covenant which God had made with his chosen people. It was at a meal of this kind

that Jesus took the bread and the cup, and (knowing that He was to give His life for what He conceived to be the effecting of God's Will for men) associated that bread and cup with His self-offering. He said that the bread which was broken and shared was "[His] body"; that the wine which was drunk by His friends was "the new covenant in my blood." And as the Disciples, after the Crucifixion had taken place, continued—as inevitably they would do—these meals of community fellowship, they came to realize that what He had said before His death was made true in their experience: He was there with them as they remembered His death and shared in the bread and wine. His presence was indeed real for them, His "benefits"—the results of His self-offering—were known; and they found that they "dwelt in him, and he in them."

The Holy Communion, or Eucharist, grounded in the historical fact of the Last Supper and validated in the continuing experience of the primitive Christian community, was primarily an *action*. It was something done, not something thought. Jesus was believed to have said, "Do this in my memorial"; the emphasis must be placed on the "do." Thus the four-fold action of the Eucharist, following the pattern of Christ's action, came to be what Dom Gregory Dix has called the "shape" of the Liturgy. Take, bless, break, give—the bread was taken and offered to God; thanksgiving

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

was said over it—and here we need to recall that for the Jew, all blessings have always been in the form of a thanksgiving to God for the objects which are to be blessed; the bread was broken, as Christ had done at the Last Supper and as His physical body was broken on the Cross; the bread was given—distributed, so that the believer might partake of it and thereby, as the Church believed, partake of Christ Himself and become one with Him. So also the cup was taken, and blessed, and given to the believer, that he might drink of it, thus sharing in the new covenant, or relationship, between God and man which the Christian Church declared Christ had established. The implications of this action were later to be worked out, so far as this was possible; but the primary thing was the action itself, the thing that was done.

Furthermore, the action was a *memorial* action. Here we must distinguish carefully between the modern notion of a memorial and the ancient Jewish one. In our own thought, a memorial is usually a mental affair; we *think back* to that which happened long ago, fixing it in our mind and meditating upon it. Not so with the Jew. When he held his Passover meal, for example, he believed—and the modern Jew still believes—that it was a memorial; but it was a memorial in the sense that by the repetition of certain actions believed to have been ordained by God, the whole reality of that which God accomplished at the first

Passover (when the Jews were delivered from the Egyptians, brought safely through the Red Sea, and made a peculiar people in covenantal relationship with God) was brought out of the past into the present and became a fact in their contemporary experience. As one of my students put it, after I had lectured on this theme, the Jewish notion is “not one of mental reverie but of vital recall.” This is the meaning of the words which the primitive Christian Church believed that Jesus had said at the Last Supper: “Do this in my memorial.” That is, “When and as you do this, my life and death and resurrection are brought out of the realm of ‘dead’ history into the living present, and I am with you as the One who lived and died and rose again from the dead.”

The Book of Common Prayer had this meaning in view when it employs, in the course of the Prayer of Consecration in the service of Holy Communion, the words: “Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of thy dearly beloved Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, we, thy humble servants, do celebrate and make here, before thy Divine Majesty, with these thy holy gifts, which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; rendering unto thee most hearty thanks for

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same."

But we have seen, in the last chapter, that all worship has the note of sacrifice, of "offering," to God. And the Holy Communion is pre-eminently sacrificial in character. It is an offering to God—"our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving." As the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer puts it, in answer to the question, "Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?": "For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." As a sacrifice, it is a memorial; as a memorial, it is a sacrifice. But if we have understood that memorial means vital recall of an event in the past into the living reality of the present, we can see that the sacrifice is not a mere token. It is in fact the Christian Church's pleading before God the Father of that "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction" which on Calvary was "once offered."

The theology of the Eucharist as a sacrifice has been a much-disputed and much-discussed matter. We need not enter into the details of this controversy here. But we can agree that the truth is well-expressed in words from a familiar and much loved hymn:

And now, O Father, mindful of the love
That bought us, once for all, on Calvary's tree,

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

And having with us him that pleads above,
We here present, we here spread forth to thee,
That only offering perfect in thine eyes,
The one true, pure, immortal sacrifice.

Look, Father, look on his anointed face,
And only look on us as found in him;
Look not on our misusings of thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim;
For lo! between our sins and their reward,
We set the passion of thy Son our Lord.

These lovely words, so profoundly true to the nature of the eucharistic action and so frequently validated in our own Christian experience, bring us to another element in the meaning of the Holy Communion. For they speak of our "having with us him that pleads above." The presence of Christ in the memorial of His sacrificial action is an integral part of Christian worship. Here, once again, there have been endless controversies as to the mode of that presence, controversies concerning Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, Virtualism, Receptionism and the like—controversies whose acrimony has done little credit to those who are called by Christ's name. Our concern is not with these, but rather to state simply that the reality of the presence of Christ in the Holy Communion is a given fact of two thousand years of Christian experience, and that Christian worship as it has historically developed has found that in the

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

partaking of the consecrated bread and wine, as Christ commanded, His “spiritual body and blood”—which is to say, the reality of His life, divine and human, in a uniquely intimate and genuine way—have been received as His presence has been known and his person adored. A verse which comes from Elizabethan times, and which is sometimes attributed to the queen herself, puts this basic truth:

He was the Word that spake it;
He took the bread and brake it;
And what his word did make it,
That I believe and take it.

There is room for agnosticism as to the *way* in which Christ is present, the *mode* in which His presence is found “in, with, and under” (as the Lutherans say) the consecrated bread and wine of the Holy Eucharist; there is for the Christian no question at all as to the *fact* that He is there.

And He is there to bring us into communion with Himself; and through Himself into that communion with God—that new relationship with the divine Reality—which it was His mission to establish among men. The “communion” side of the Holy Communion has sometimes been placed at the head of the list of the various elements characteristic of the Lord’s Supper. This is a mistake. The Communion is the *result* of the whole action. As the Christian Church

makes memorial of Christ's life and work, bringing these from the past into the present; as through that memorial, it pleads before God the wonder of the self-offering which Christ made on Calvary; as the communicants know the presence of Christ brought from heavenly places into their heart of hearts—so they are in communion with Him, and with God and man through Him, the communion which is Life Eternal.

There are two final points which ought to be made. The first is that the Holy Eucharist is the action of the whole Church of Christ. It is not a private act of worship in which we take part because we find it helpful or pleasant or inspiring—such a view changes Christianity into a sort of gnostic and esoteric relationship with God and negates the communal character of the responsive movement of men to the redemption wrought in Jesus Christ. We come to the altar as a body; indeed, we come as those who are “very members, incorporate in the mystical Body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people.” Thus the nature of worship as a social action, a cult, is vindicated. You will recall that we saw in the last chapter that normally worship has this characteristic—the tribe or group offers its praise to God, through a priest to be sure, but always with the priest as one who represents the people who are making the offering. In Christianity this truth is patently plain. The

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

priest who celebrates the Eucharist is not acting in his own name; he is acting for Christ in his Church, and for the Church which is Christ's Church. A whole doctrine of the Christian ministry is involved at this point, and the writer has sought elsewhere to develop it at length. It is the notion of the ministry as representative and functional, standing for, and acting on behalf of, Christ; yet standing for Him and acting in His behalf as Christ Himself acts in the Church which belongs to Him.

Thus Christian worship, centered in the Holy Communion, is the offering of the Church itself to God, through Christ; and every member of the Church—you, and I, and the humblest and remotest Christian believer—is incorporated in that offering. The long history of man's seeking to offer himself to God, as is his bounden duty, is here fulfilled as the worshiper is brought into union with Christ and by Christ is offered to the Father, that through such self-commitment and dedication to God, the will of the Father may more perfectly be done and our own lives enriched by His Grace, so that "we may do all such good works as he has prepared for us to walk in"; and, in the end, dwell with Him in heavenly places.

The last point is simply that the Eucharist, while it is the crown of Christian worship, is not the whole of it. Not only the Catholic tradition, in its Eastern and Western forms, but the great Reformers them-

selves (like Luther and Calvin) intended that the Lord's Supper should be the normal weekly act of Christian worship, celebrated every Lord's Day. But none of these varieties of Christianity has thought that the Eucharist exhausted the possibilities of Christian worship. The fact that in the Prayer Book there are such services as Morning and Evening Prayer, the Litany, the Penitential Office, and others, demonstrates that there are other ways. All of these might be compared to the lesser jewels which in some precious ornament surround and set off the great central gem. Hence we should not wish to leave the impression that there is nothing but eucharistic worship in the Christian tradition. Rather, we should say that there are many different kinds of expression of the Christian action in worship; yet all of them find their implied center in the Eucharist. The day may not be far off when in every branch of Christendom the centrality of the Lord's Supper will again be recognized, as the Catholic tradition and the great Reformers recognized it, and the eucharistic action will again be the usual and normal way in which, Sunday by Sunday, Christians gather to offer their prayer and praise to God through Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. But when that day comes, it will not be by denying the enormous value or the great helpfulness of every turning to God in adoration and in praise. Nor will it be by minimizing the per-

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

sonal devotion of the faithful Christian believer who in the privacy of his chamber seeks to enter into communion with his God and there find strength to live throughout the days of his life as one whose will is conformed to the Will of the Father. It is to that aspect of the total Christian life—private devotion—that the next chapter will be devoted.

10

THE PERSONAL DEVOTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

THE writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews admonished his readers that they were not to forsake the "gathering of themselves" in Christian worship. But he did not intend to suggest that public gatherings, even for the purpose of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, could altogether supplant the private and personal devotion of the Christian believer. The fact is that the worship of the Church as a social body is dependent for the richness which it may possess upon the continued and regular personal devotion of those who are its participants; and contrariwise, that the private prayer of a Christian will be given point and significance as it leads to and is itself enriched by regularity of attendance at the public services of the Church. Here is another instance of "both . . . and" rather than "either . . . or."

Precisely as Christian worship, in its social sense, has its own peculiar characteristics and is marked by a special religious quality, so the private devotion of the Christian is different from the life in prayer of

other religious people. We shall seek to explore this difference a little later on. Here, however, we would make plain that prayer as such is a human trait which is found among all peoples. From the most primitive of savages to the sophisticated modern, the urge to "speak" to an Other not human would appear to be almost universal. Even when God is denied, the practice of meditation is often commended; Comte, who had no other deity than *le grand Etre* (which was the human race in its best representatives), still thought that contemplation and aspiration directed towards this "being" (if that word is not absurdly inappropriate) was necessary to a good life. And among those who have not taken such an atheistic view, prayer seems to spring naturally to the lips when one feels one's sense of need or when one is overwhelmed with gratitude for the good things that life can provide. Whether it be naive and almost superstitious, or highly spiritual and morally developed, prayer is natural to man. As William James remarked, men pray because they cannot help praying.

Their prayer will be to a large degree the reflection of the kind of God in whom they believe. If their religion is primitive, their prayer will also be primitive. If their god is morally dubious, so will their prayer be. As they rise to a higher conception of deity, their praying will be more spiritual, purer, less concerned with the temporal goods that communion with deity

PERSONAL DEVOTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

may be thought to provide. Christian prayer is a reflection of the Christian conception of God; and here once again the maxim to which we referred earlier—*lex orandi lex credendi*, the rule of praying and the rule of believing are the same—is seen to be true. Prayer which is addressed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is different in quality from prayer addressed to some primitive deity. On the other hand, there is a real continuity. For, in Professor James Bissett Pratt's excellent phrase, all prayer is man's attempt to enter into relationship with that which, or with him whom, man regards as the determiner of destiny. And we may say that, in fact, there is only one prayer, just as we have seen that there is only one religion and one way of worship—starting in crude and simple ways and rising to higher and higher levels, until prayer becomes Christian prayer, informed by the Spirit of Christ and uttered in His name.

Prayer, like worship, is primarily man's attempt at self-oblation to his god. It is the offering of self to the deity so that the praying person may be conformed to the will of the god; here it differs, as we have already seen, from magic—which is the attempt to conform the nature of things to man's desire. Much of our supposed praying must be seen as hovering between magic and real prayer; but such ambiguity is what one might expect in view of man's own ambigui-

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

ous nature, with the conflict in his personality between the higher and the lower self—the lower concerned to put his own wishes at the center of things, the higher to commit himself to that which is *in fact* at the center of things. But when prayer falls to the level of attempts at coercing deity, it has stopped being prayer; and for the Christian, with his view of the right ordering of things in the light of God's self-revelation in Christ, any thought of coercing God is an utter impossibility and can have no place in his prayer.

The classical definition of prayer, given by St. John of Damascus and taken over by St. Thomas Aquinas, is that prayer is "the elevation of the soul to God." It is the intentional and conscious placing of oneself in the presence of God, lifting one's personality to Him and seeking to be in fellowship with Him. This is just another way of describing prayer as self-oblation, for the only fashion in which it is possible for man to be lifted to God is by his giving of himself in dedication to the God whom he would know. In other words, prayer is an "other-regarding" activity of the human personality. It is not concerned so much with oneself and one's wishes, as it is with God and His purpose. Prayer, like worship, is a purifying of self, a disinfecting of human life from the germs of false self-centeredness.

The genius of Christian prayer is that it is "in the

PERSONAL DEVOTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

name of Christ." For primitive men, and for the fairly sophisticated Jew and Gentile of the times described in our Scriptures, there was power in "the name." For the "name" of a person was in some way conceived to be his revelation of himself; it was the giving-away of the secret of his life. And it was thought that if one knew the "name" of a god, one had been admitted in a real way into a knowledge of his true nature. Thus "the name of Christ" meant the inner, secret quality of his life. To pray "in Christ's name" meant to share in the spirit of Christ's life and in that spirit to utter one's words of prayer. We might very well put this idea in the words that Jesus himself uttered in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Not my will, but thine, be done." To pray "in Christ's name" is therefore to pray in such a fashion that one has given oneself to Christ and approaches God in terms of Christ, so that Christ's purpose becomes our purpose and we address God as if we were speaking for Christ and Christ were speaking through us. Here is another illustration of the way in which Christian faith, with its total giving of self to one's Lord, is linked with the whole context of the Christian life itself. As we believe, so we pray; as we pray, so we are.

It will be recalled that in describing the nature of worship, in its most general sense, we found that there were five elements which form the action of the

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

believer in his cultic approach to deity: Adoration, or praise; thanksgiving; acknowledgement of failure or sin; prayer for others; prayer for oneself. These five are found in worship, in varying degrees of emphasis, and these are the elements that are found in prayer.

And they are found in that order, when prayer is at its best. For if prayer be other-regarding, then God must be given first place, and attention to self and its desires must come at the end. Let us try to analyze a little more in detail these five elements in advanced prayer.

First of all, adoration or praise. This is the initial step in Christian prayer, because it is the way in which we can most effectively be lifted to God. God is not to be adored and praised in the fulsome and vulgar way in which earthly rulers of an earlier day wished to be honored. It is not that He demands from us such adulation. Rather, the point of adoration and praise is that man must "needs love the highest when he sees it." In the presence of that which is altogether lovely, we are compelled to express our admiration. In the presence of Him who is high and lifted up, yet glorious in His holiness and in His mercy, we are drawn to speak out our wondering adoration. We might say that God permits this to take place, for the simple reason that He knows that man reaches his highest and best only as he loses himself in such wonder, such awe and praise. This is the way in which we are raised above

PERSONAL DEVOTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

self and delivered from our captivity to our own interests. So adoration of God can give nothing to *Him* that He does not already possess; but it can give to *us* a new dimension of life and a new view of the meaning of things, by putting God where He belongs, where indeed He really is, at the heart of existence.

The recognition of that truth is immediately reflected in thanksgiving. For gratitude is a characteristic of the human race when it is really at its best. The words in the *Gloria in excelsis* in which God is thanked for His "great glory" provide us a good place to begin our thought about thanksgiving. We have a human analogy for this. Sometimes, as we all know, we are moved to say (either outright, in words, or in our heart of hearts) that we are thankful that our friend exists; we are grateful simply that he *is*, quite apart from all that he may have done for us. In this way, adoration and praise lead to, and are expressed in, our thanksgiving for the fact that God exists, that He exists in all His majesty yet in His mercy, that the Creator of the world is the God of love. But from this, of course, we must go on gladly to recognize and gratefully to acknowledge all that God has done; as the words of the General Thanksgiving in Morning and Evening Prayer put it, "We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life." But more than this, because more directly related to our life as Christians, we give thanks "above all,

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory." To have "a due sense" of God's mercies, to be "unfeignedly thankful," is to be in the position of recognizing that it is "[God] who has made us and not we ourselves"; that we are dependent upon Him and His goodness; that all our hopes for ourselves and for our world rest not on our proud human imaginings and devisings but upon that which God can and will do.

In other words, by putting adoration of God and the attitude of thanksgiving in first place, we are enabled to assimilate the truth that men are derivative and limited beings, creatures of God, and that they can only live safely and well when this creatureliness runs as a *leitmotiv* through all their thoughts and actions. This does not for a moment imply a false passivity in human life, as if there were nothing whatever that we can do about anything. It simply asserts what is patently the fact, that all of our efforts are as a drop in the bucket, are indeed futile and stupid, when we seek to live as if the immediacies of our own actions were the ultimate governing principles of existence. The strange truth is that when men live in dependence on God, they are enabled to act with more vigor and courage and with less likelihood of despair and disappointment than when they falsely

assume that they are lords of all they survey and act as if they were sovereign over the Creation.

In the sight of God, the generous Giver of good, an honest man must see that his own life is not very praiseworthy. That is, he must recognize that he is a sinner. We need not bother ourselves at this point with an analysis of the concept of sin, save to remark that he is a very blind man who can claim that his life is perfect by any standard that is at all rigorous and exacting. If, as Socrates said, "the unexamined life is not worth living," it is surely the case that when we look at ourselves in the presence of the purity and the charity of God revealed in Christ and gratefully adored in prayer, we see only too well the blemishes which mark our selfish little existence. And if we see this, the part of honesty is to acknowledge the truth. In recent years we have learned from the depth psychologists how important it is that we shall both recognize and say what we know about ourselves; and that we be helped, by analysis if that is necessary, to penetrate as deeply as possible into our own past, so that we can both see and say these things. There is a therapeutic result from such honest self-understanding. The frank confession, in God's presence, of that which is wrong about ourselves is the way to our securing the health of personality which God intends for us. The man who will not acknowledge that he is wrong cannot be helped, even by God

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

Himself, to be made right. "An honest confession is good for the soul," says the old adage; conviction of sin, the evangelical preachers used to declare, is the necessary pre-condition for the experience of Salvation.

The two remaining elements in prayer are petitionary in nature. Up to this point, we have said nothing about *asking*; prayer has been concerned with looking at God and at ourselves in God's presence. But intercession for others and for the causes which seem good to us, and petition for ourselves and that which we think is needful for us, are also part—although not the first or primary part—of prayer. In both intercession and personal petition, the Christian rule—"not my will, but thine"—must never be forgotten. God is the Sovereign Lord; His purpose is that which we must wish to be accomplished, confident as we are that His purpose is altogether good even though at a given moment we may not completely understand how this may be.

There are two important considerations here. In the first place, the fact of intercession and personal petition as part of prayer implies that there is a certain "open-ness" about the Creation, so that genuinely new and different things may be accomplished in it if human wills are aligned with the Will of God. How this may be done we are not able to see with any degree of clarity; that it is so is the condition of all

effectual petition. On the one hand, this does not mean that "anything may happen" if only we pray for it; on the other hand, it does mean that God can and does use the strong desires of His children, in a fashion known only to Him, for the bringing to pass of that which He wills. As we might put it, God takes our praying into account in His governance of the world. As a parent will both consider and use the desires of his children in working out his plan for their best development, so God, without violating His own purpose, may use our strong desires for the good in such a way that richer ends are achieved than might otherwise be the case.

Nor need we fear that scientific thought has made such a view an impossibility. For this is no absolutely rigid, mechanistic universe in which we live; our best modern writers on the philosophy of science are constantly assuring us of the limited, yet genuine, openness in the scheme of things. And further, the so-called laws of science are at best nothing but a statement of the observed general sequences of behavior in those areas of the Creation with which they are concerned; they are, so to say, "statistical averages," and they do not cover everything. From the Christian point of view, there is indeed a real consistency in the universe; but this consistency does not lie in some arbitrarily imposed laws established by the human mind, but in the indeflectible purpose of God, change-

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

less in its nature, yet adapting its expression to the contingencies which arise in a world to which God has given a real, although limited, freedom. The emergence of novelty is not merely not precluded by such a view; it is, on the contrary, demanded by it; and the fact of such novelty, such unexpected and unprecedented newnesses, is all about us if we have eyes to see.

Thus Christian intercession and prayer of petition are not only a possibility but provide a valuable insight into the nature of things. We can pray for others and for ourselves with assurance and vigor, always provided we submit our specific desires to the Will of God and recognize that it is His Will which is to be accomplished—and accomplished, in part, through our strong desire that it shall be done.

The second consideration is that as the individual develops in his life of prayer, he will find that petition for material advantage is less and less a part of his asking, and that more and more he desires only that he may be conformed to God's Will, so that as Christ's Spirit is formed in him he is enabled to live as *un autre Christ*—that fine phrase which was so often used by French devotional writers in the seventeenth century. And to be, in our derivative little way, "another Christ" means that we neither ask, nor expect, to be exempted from pain and suffering, but rather pray and hope that whatever material lack we may be called

PERSONAL DEVOTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

upon to endure in an unfinished and therefore imperfect world, may be used in such a way that others may be enriched, and that through us, as those who share in the Cross of Christ, the world may be brought closer to the love of God. Kierkegaard has a great passage, dealing with the place of those who are thus called upon to suffer. He calls it *The Pinch of Spice*:

As a skilful cook says of a dish in which there are already a great many ingredients: "It still needs just a little pinch of cinnamon" (and we perhaps could hardly tell by the taste that this little pinch of spice had been added, but she knew precisely why and precisely how it affected the taste of the whole mixture); as an artist says with a view to the colour effect of a whole painting which is composed of many, many, colours: "There and there, at that little point, it needs a touch of red" (and we perhaps could hardly even discover the red, so carefully has the artist shaded it, although he knows exactly why it should be introduced). So it is with Providence.

O, the Providence of the world is a vast house-keeping, a grandiose painting. Yet he, the Master, God in heaven, behaves like the cook and the artist. He says: There must be a little touch of spice here, a little touch of red. We do not understand why, we are hardly aware of it, since that little bit is so thoroughly absorbed in the whole. But God knows why.

A little pinch of spice! That is to say: Here a

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

man must be sacrificed, he is needed to impart a particular taste to the rest.

These are the correctives. It is a woeful error for the one who is used to apply the corrective to become impatient and try to make the corrective the norm for others. That is an attempt to bring everything to confusion.

A little pinch of spice! Humanly speaking, what a painful thing, thus to be sacrificed, to be the little pinch of spice! But on the other hand, God knows well the man he elects to use in this way, and then he knows also, in the inward understanding of it, how to make it a blessed thing for him to be sacrificed, that among the thousands of divers voices which express, each in its own way, the same thing, his will also be heard, and perhaps especially his, which is truly *de profundis*, proclaiming: God is love. The birds on the branches, the lilies in the field, the deer in the forest, the fish in the sea, countless hosts of happy men exultantly proclaim: God is love. But beneath all these sopranos, supporting them as it were, like the bass part, is audible the *de profundis* which issues from those who are sacrificed: God is love.

The personal devotion of a Christian, we may then say in conclusion, has for its goal precisely that which Christian worship, in the sense of the cult, has for *its* goal: the offering of self to God, even in our intercessions for others and for ourselves. For in our intercessions for others we are really offering them to God,

PERSONAL DEVOTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

so that His Will may be done in them; and in our prayer for ourselves, we are giving ourselves to God, so that in us and through us, His holy Will may more effectively be brought to pass. But it is all through Jesus Christ our Lord, in His name and by His spirit. We worship God and we pray to him, not as those who are ignorant of his true nature and his purpose in creating and sustaining us. We worship and we pray as those who are members of Christ, and by that token, children of God and inheritors of His heavenly Kingdom. It is as response to God's movement towards us that we adore Him, praise Him, acknowledge our sin before Him, pray for others and for ourselves. Thus it is that the end for which we are seeking, both in our daily living and in our daily praying, in our acts of faith and in our participation in the communal worship of the Eucharist, is precisely that which, in the seventeenth chapter of his Gospel, the writer of St. John sets before his readers as he represents our Lord Himself, praying in His great high-priestly prayer:

Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are . . . I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou lovest me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Section Three

11

OUR FAITH AND OUR LIVING

THE general theme of this chapter is our faith and its implications for life. This is such a huge subject that I must beg indulgence, therefore, if I give my space to but a small fraction of the historic faith—namely its main emphases on God, Christ, the Church, and eternal life—and consider only these in our modern context, in the effort to discover what values they may have for men and women who are tossed about in an unsettled world, with an uncertain future, and doomed—almost certainly it seems—to a doubtful truce of arms, at worst to a war which threatens to annihilate man as we have known him and in any event to leave us a bare existence such as we can eke out on a totally devastated planet.

But first let me say that when I speak of the historic faith I mean precisely that. The day of a reductionist Christianity is at an end. On every side we have witnessed the collapse of the old optimism, in which “the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man” were easily linked with “the progress of the human race forever upwards and onwards.” Despite superficial thinking like that found, as I think, at the con-

clusion of du Noüy's *Human Destiny*, the temper of our time is one which is much more plainly realistic and honest. We can have no truck with cheap religions which promise easy improvement for man; we know, now, that man is a sinner, and a terrible sinner as well as a miserable one. We know that only from beyond the bourne of time and space can a Salvation come which is adequate to give us hope; and we are all of us, I take it, quite done now with the notion that a finite God, a humanitarian Christ, a sociological Church, and "the wages of going on," will provide a sufficient answer for the dilemma in which man finds himself. This, at least, the last twenty-five years—culminating in the war, the atomic bomb (America's most doubtful among many doubtful contributions to human life), and what has happened since—should have taught us.

Yet in our reaction from the excesses of optimistic liberalism, we have gone much too far in the other direction. Nowadays, irrationalism, authoritarianism in the worst sense, dictatorship in a spiritual if not a material way, are all the rage. We are witnessing the emergence of Neo-Fundamentalism in many guises, and it behooves us to take care lest the real gains won during the heyday of Liberalism be lost, so that (so far as there is to be any future for us at all) the battle must once more be fought, for a truly free and, in the *right meaning*, liberal religion, which is yet firmly

historic and orthodox, such as may win the hearts and souls of men.

Anglicanism represents, we believe, the kind of dynamic Catholicism which alone can guarantee the maintenance of the historic faith, while at the same time securing that freedom which man has discovered in the days since the Reformation and which he properly and firmly insists shall be his right. No dead orthodoxy this, but a living and vital movement of sound thinking and right believing—an orthodoxy which is alive and moving, moving in the lines laid down for us by our own past but still moving, and alert to the truths, whatever they may be and wherever they may be found, which modern science, philosophy, and thought have made available to us. Catholicism with the windows open—that is our Anglican heritage; and it is that sort of faith which we shall call the historic faith, and seek to consider in relation to our modern situation.

First, then, our faith in God. For this, certainly, is our central conviction, despite all appearances to the contrary. We shall see presently the place of our Lord Jesus Christ in this whole context, the utter necessity of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ, and the inescapable reality of “the resurrection of the body, and the life of the world to come.” At this moment, however, let us make quite clear that the whole point and meaning of the faith is that it is about

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

God. It is the deity of God that is fundamental to the whole Christian position. God is God—and by God we mean no mere stream of tendency, no evolutionary influence, no compendious noun to describe the sum of human good will, but the one almighty and eternal Reality upon whom we depend both for our being and our continued existence, whether or not we are believers in Him, worshipers of Him, or doers of His Will. He *is*—and He alone really *is*. And this means purpose, significance, and sense in the universe in which we live, and in our lives which are part of that created order. There is no other way in which the world and our lives can have purpose, significance, and meaning—for it is idiotic to talk as if these could be given to finites unless there be something from outside and beyond which values them, appreciates them, appraises them, and thinks them worthwhile.

The supreme faith of the Christian Church is that God *is* and that God *reigns*. All that happens is in some way, either directly or permissively, related to His most holy Will: “nothing walks with aimless feet,” and we shall make hash of human life if we assume that we can evade God or get on well enough with only a casual nod at Him; that is not the way the universe is run. Either we co-operate with His purpose, or we are utterly smashed—and it ought not to have required a World War to show us that, although God Himself knows that it is doubtful if even the

war has convinced many of us of that terrible but unavoidable truth. "His ways are just and holy altogether"—and any man or any nation which departs from those ways will sooner or later come to shipwreck. We must proclaim the inescapability of God.

Now this confidence in the reality of God and His Will at once enables us to face the experience of life with a like confidence. We live, as we all know, in an age characterized by neurosis: fear, frustration, schizophrenic social and individual lives, despair with regard to the future, hopelessness about the present—these are the marks of our time. And they are bound to be with us if our perspective is time-bound and world-bound; it is only by relationship to, and trust in, some Reality bigger and other than the world, yet working in and through the processes of time and history, that we can be raised above the level of immediacy into the sphere of ultimacy—and it is in that sphere alone, so far as I can see, that man can achieve any peace of mind. But if the Will of God is in control of the historic series itself, then our security in the realm of ultimacy does not deny the importance of the realm of immediacy; in other words, Christianity offers no extricationist technique, by which (as it were, in Aldous Huxley's fashion) we may escape the necessities of temporal existence; our God is *in* history as well as *above* history.

Therefore sheer and utter hopelessness and despair

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

are impossible for the Christian. While we ought not to continue to commit the error of so many people, especially religious people, that is, "kidding ourselves" about the likelihood of a bright future; we cannot, on the other hand, commit the error of the totally disillusioned, which is to give themselves over to the darkest outlook and see no chance for anything but the gloom of night in a world where all ends in nothing, and nothing is the price of it all. There is a purpose of good at work in the world. Its achievements are not always visible to our eyes, and there is no *Christian* guarantee, despite a secular misreading of Christianity in the heyday of Liberalism, that the purpose will be worked out, according to our prescription, and exhaustively, in *this* world. But the purpose stands sure in God's providence; and every good deed, every right and brave action, every move towards justice and good will amongst men, every search for truth, every creation of beauty, above all, every humble and holy life, plays its due part in the accomplishment of that purpose. By God's strange operation, the essence of that action or word or thought is made to contribute to a good final product; and the whole course of the world itself, no matter how ghastly it may appear to us from time to time and how hopeless may seem the possibility of lasting peace and order amongst men, will contribute in God's sight to a good final product.

OUR FAITH AND OUR LIVING

You may call this a rather chastened optimism; I know of no other which is truly Christian, for the confidence of the Christian man is not set on the evolution of a perfect society, here in our secular world, but "on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Yet this Christ, now regnant with the Father, is the same Christ who for us men and for our Salvation came down from Heaven—so we are driven to make terms with Him, the Incarnate Lord.

Once again, we must comment on the change in atmosphere. While the humanitarian Christ is still popular enough, so that a recent President of the United States can refer to the need for following the teachings of "the great Disciple of Peace," yet in thinking circles and amongst scholars of repute, there has been at last a recognition that the Jesus of those "happy walks and talks by the Lake of Galilee," so popular when I was young, never existed excepting in the imagination of the sentimental Liberal Protestants of the time. The Christ of the Gospels, and the Christ of the Church's faith, is One who is indeed truly human, in every respect and without equivocation; but he is also One who is truly divine—pictured first as Messiah, sent from God and coming again from God with power and great glory; pictured soon as the Word of God, as God Himself, made flesh and dwelling amongst us. This rediscovery of the *real* historical

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

Jesus, who is the Christ of faith, changes the emphasis in our Christian preaching and thinking; no longer can we talk only of the imitation of the Master's manhood—although we must never forget that in one sense this manhood is *part* of the full Gospel. We are obliged to make terms with the faith that here, in the conditions of human life, the very God who swings the stars in their courses has tabernacled in true human life, as bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Now this is an audacious faith; and if it be true, if it be indeed "the terrible, frightened, whispered, sweet, heart-shattering secret of God's way with us," it can be true only because God and man are not far off one from the other, but rather are ever in close relationship, so that every one of us is penetrated by the presence and purpose of God, in greater or less degree, grounded and established in the Word of God, and therefore "capable of deity," as the watchword of Catholic thought so rightly puts it, despite Calvin's protest. Man is not God, of course; man remains man—yet as the grounding of his being, there is somewhat of God. It is the Christian faith that this *Logos spermatikos*, as the early apologists put it—this germinal Word, has in Christ become *Logos ensarkos*, the Word incarnate. Without contradicting the conditions of human life, but within those very conditions, God can, and God did, dwell as Man, our Brother.

OUR FAITH AND OUR LIVING

This faith, which, in Soloviev's words, is the very differentia of Christianity from all other religions, is the thing that ultimately gives the Christian his hope, as it also imparts to him his charity. For every man is now the brother of God, and God is every man's Brother. Such I take to be the true motivation for Christian concern about social, economic, political, national, and international problems; for example—that the path of life trodden by those who are brothers of God-made-man must be made a fit path for those who are God's brothers as well as God's sons. It ought to be inconceivable to a Christian that any obstacle, beyond those of temporal and finite necessity, should be placed in the way of the full and free growth, in and under God, of any man or woman or child, because each and all of them now must be seen as blood-brothers, not of us only, but of the most-high God. That is why Father Dolling was interested in the drains of East London. Perhaps you recall how he replied when asked, "Why do you concern yourself about these matters?" with the words, "I believe in the Incarnation."

We shall see in a moment the deeper sense of brotherhood with those who belong with us to the Church and hence are members with us of Christ's mystical Body. At the moment I am concerned to stress simply our total human solidarity, not only because we are sons of God by creation, but because

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

we are brothers of God by redemption. Piers Plowman was made to sing of Calvary,

Blood brothers we became there,
And gentlemen each one . . .

There, so far as I can see, is the only ultimate reconciliation of man with man. Made by God, we are, all of us, either potentially or actually, re-made by Him; we share in our common sin, for each one of us is guilty of horrible defection from the true pattern of human life, the full realization of our manhood as mind-bodies dwelling in community; we share likewise in the given reality of the life of Christ coursing through *humanity*, and in those who become *members of His Body* burgeoning forth into greater or less visible expression. Our humanity is one with God, now; we have become partakers of His divinity, who for our sake became sharer in our humanity. Human nature is enthroned at God's right hand, and we can despair of no man if we believe in the incarnate, crucified, risen, and regnant Christ: least of all, perhaps, can we despair of ourselves, whom we know so appallingly well. Need I tell parish priests that it is such a Gospel of hope that countless thousands need today?

And now we come to that rediscovered doctrine of our day: the mystical Body of Christ in which we, by Baptism, are incorporate so that "in Christ" we

live divinely human lives, as members of the order of supernatural charity which permeates and penetrates this order of relative justice which we call the secular world. William Temple said, years ago, "Let the Church *be* the Church. . . ." But what *is* the Church? Is it really the human organization which flourishes at 281 Fourth Avenue, or even in the Vatican, in Rome? No, it is not *that*, although that is the empirical expression, not to be sneered at, of the true reality of the Church, which is the supernatural organism, the divine society, in which Christ Incarnate still dwells among men, making them one with Him and thereby one with God. The sense of "churchly appurtenance," in von Hügel's phrase, is something we must cultivate these days, to help our people recognize that in and through the parish of St Vitus, Smithville, the very glory of the mystical Body of Christ shines forth, "the holy Church throughout all the world" is reflected, and Christ is present still as we offer ourselves, in union with His perfect Sacrifice, in the eucharistic memorial of the passion and death of our Head.

To develop this sense of "belonging" will be a way in which, here and now, life can become meaningful; for in the little cells of Christian faith and love which are our parishes as they ought to be, hope is implanted in men's hearts that lifts them above, and yet sends them back into, the community life of which they are also a part, knowing that they have passed from death

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

into life, because they love the brethren and are therefore empowered to bring a stream of fresh, courageous, loving life to a sadly disillusioned and despairing world. That is what the Church can do, ought to do, and to a rather remarkable degree is doing, wherever it is let be itself.

It is, I have said, at the Eucharist that this reality is effected. Without question of kind of Churchmanship—high, low, broad, or, best of all, “deep”—this is the common fact about which we as Anglicans, loyal to our established liturgy, must center our interest and our preaching and our teaching. It did not require Dom Gregory Dix to tell us—although we can be grateful that he has done so—that the heart and center of Christian life these two thousand years has been the Table of the Lord and the repetition of those actions which spring from what our Saviour performed on the night in which He was betrayed. Our Prayer Book says it all, yet how many of us have failed to do what the Prayer Book plainly intends—to make this Table and its service, rather than a clerically intended service like Morning Prayer, the chief event of every Sunday, in order that the people of Christ may be incorporated into Him, find there the strength for life, be taught there the meaning of life, and be sent forth to conform life to the pattern there displayed.

But human life cannot be exhausted within this

world. There is the "sure and certain hope" of life not simply *beyond* but *more than* this world can contain or convey—and in this sense, surely, Christianity is incurably otherworldly. "Thou hast made us for thyself, O God. . . ." At best, we men are pilgrims whose true *Patria* is the heart of God; we walk as wayfaring men in the company of the Son of God, seeking to do our duty and live aright in this world, but not ashamed to let it be known that God has prepared for us another habitation, "a city which hath foundations." We are, indeed, colonists of Heaven, as Moffat rightly translates St. Paul's phrase. We are, then, resident in this world, with the task of making it, so far as may be, a replica of the perfect justice and utter charity of our homeland, but not surprised nor in despair when the work cannot be brought to complete fulfilment because the conditions of our present place of residence do not permit, or our selfishness and pride interfere.

There is, and must be, an amphibian quality about the Christian's life; he is a citizen of two cities, that of God, which in the Church is partially realized even now; that of Man, in which he must strive for the relative goods which are possible in the realm of space and time. Hence there is a tension, if you please, in Christian living; it is a fruitful tension, and a right one, meaning that we are never contented, like earthworms, with the *status quo*; like Mallory and Irvine,

CHRISTIAN AFFIRMATIONS

we want to go all-out so that we can climb Everest and stand where man has never yet stood. That is the very secret of Christian living—a divine discontent and a desire for “more,” so that the very mountains can become a way by which we shall walk towards our destiny in God. St. Augustine knew all this centuries ago; hence he could write that we live, quite literally, by hope—that is, by the earnest expectation of that which we shall be in God; so we can walk the path of this world, singing in our hearts, as he said, because we are “on the way.” “So sing and march on,” he wrote, and even when Rome was falling and all civilization seemed at an end, he was not in despair, for he knew by faith that God reigned, and that in the midst of secular disillusionment the eternal hills stood firm.

Something like this, too, is what we need today—to have a song in our hearts as we see the United Nations crumbling, peace retreating to an improbable future, and God alone knows what awful fate in store for us and our proud civilization. But the only song which we can sing is one of the “songs of Zion,” the endless “Alleluia!” which can be on the lips of those whose hearts are fixed where true joys can be found. Above all, in this our time of tribulations, let us not be found guilty of failure in preaching to our people that “there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God, even the dwelling-

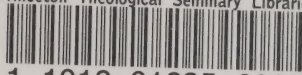
place of the tabernacle of the most Highest." Of that river, whose life is eternal, we need not be ashamed, and we must help men and women to drink of it as they walk in the Way.

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